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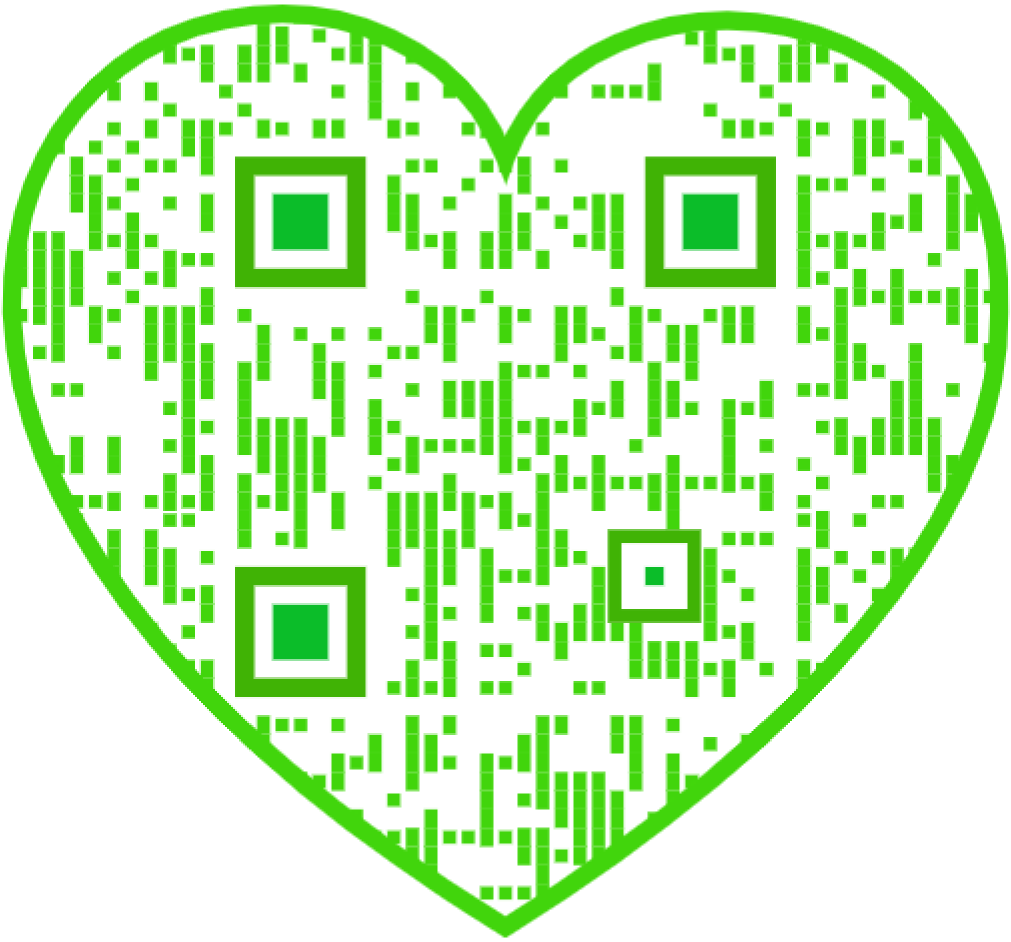
- SEA PRO 225FLX SANDBAR BOAT
- BLUEWATER 25T
- LANCER CRAFT/ELCO ELECTRIC LEGACY

APRIL 2025
VOLUME 98 NUMBER 3



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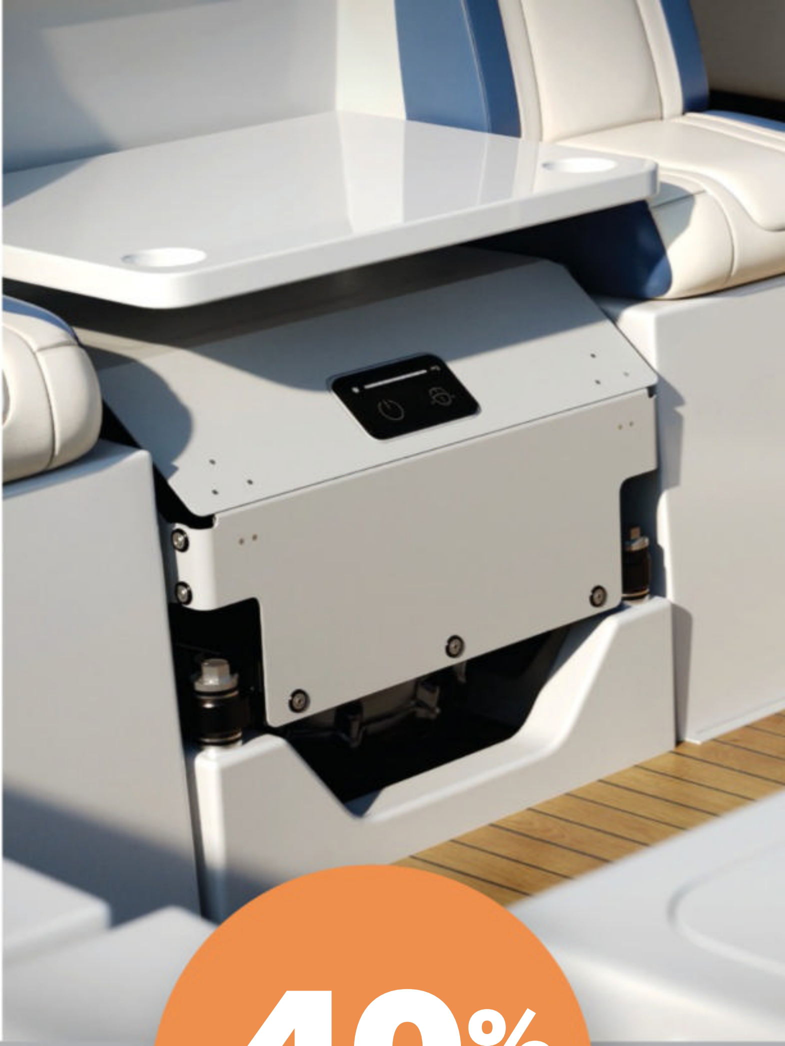

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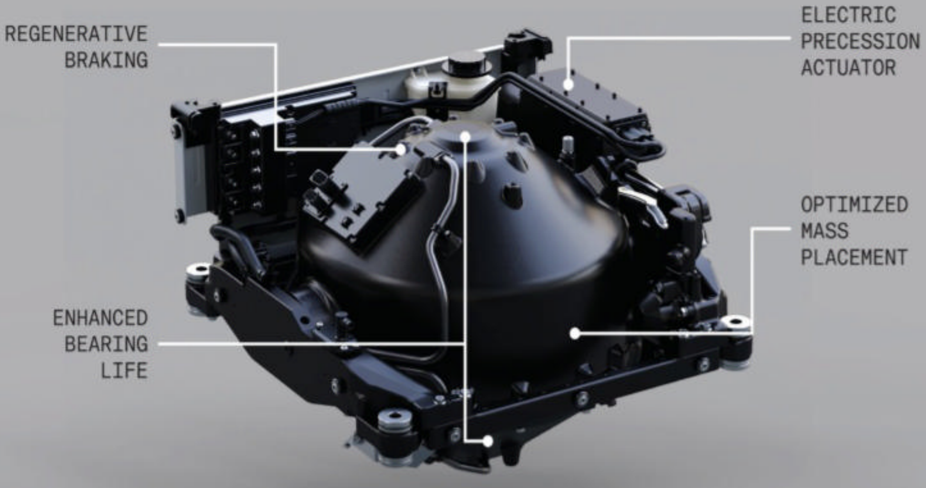

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FEATURES

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CERTIFIED BOAT TESTS

ON THE COVER

The Regal 43 SAV combines bluewater capability with onboard luxury and room to overnight in style.
Photo: Tom King

LAUNCH PADS
Seven great boat choices for first-time boat buyers and fun on the water.
BY THE *BOATING* TECH TEAM
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BATTLE OF THE 200s: SUZUKI V-6 VS. INLINE-4
We put two Suzuki outboards to the test.
BY ALAN JONES
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Adventure Awaits

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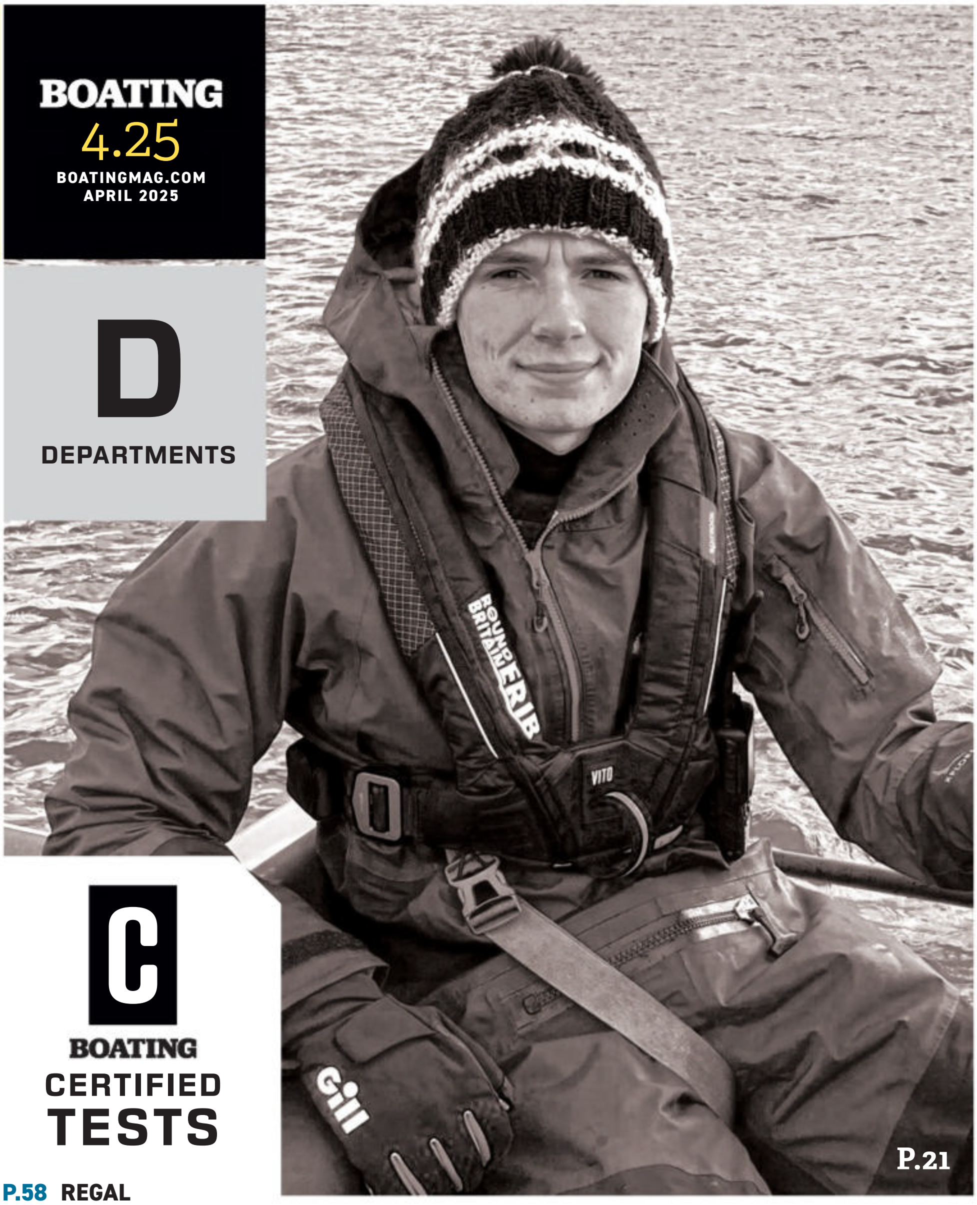
DEPARTMENTS



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- Solid-state batteries

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- Live sonar in salt water
- Siren 3 Connected Boat system

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PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY HARRY BESLEY, CAPT. VINCENT DANIELLO, COURTESY LOWRANCE, COURTESY GARMIN, COURTESY BLUE SEA SYSTEMS, COURTESY WEST MARINE

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43 SAV
This new sport-activity vessel covers all the bases when it comes to fun.

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A new Euro-styled adventure boat hits the US market.

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225FLX SANDBAR BOAT
Visit your local coves and sandbars with this versatile boat.

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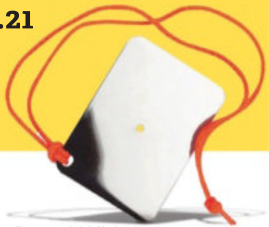

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THE BOAT DOCTOR

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five things you should know about boat insurance

Are you ready to embark on your next on-water adventure? Before you set sail, here are five things to know about boat insurance.

1. **Boat insurance isn't just for accidents**
   With comprehensive coverage, you'll also be protected financially for theft, vandalism, and unexpected events like storms if you need repairs or replacements due to damage.

2. **Accidents can happen to anyone**
   When accidents happen, boat insurance offers liability coverage for damages or injuries you cause while boating, up to specified limits. It can also cover lawsuit costs if you're sued.

3. **Boat insurance can cover medical payments**
   Boat insurance offers a range of optional medical payments coverage limits, helping to cover medical expenses if you're in an accident or someone is hurt on your boat, regardless of fault.

4. **Most lenders require boat insurance**
   If you financed your boat, you'll likely need boat insurance since most lenders require boat insurance to protect their investment. Additionally, some marinas or municipalities require proof of insurance for docking.

5. **Progressive offers specialized boat coverages**
   Ever worry about getting stuck on the water? Progressive's Sign & Glide® On-Water Towing coverage[**] can help. It's an additional coverage that steps in if your boat is disabled or breaks down on the water, paying for on-water towing, jump starts, soft ungroundings, and fuel delivery. Fuel cost isn't included.

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By Kevin Falvey

JUST WAIT

Sometimes the best course of action is delayed action.

In my formative years of boating, lawn mowing, and driving cars, I learned a thing or two about carburetors. A primary lesson: If you flood a carbureted engine, the main thing you do to overcome the situation is wait.

The carburetor no longer reigns as a mainstay of marine propulsion, but waiting remains a great strategy for boaters to employ in a variety of circumstances.

Waiting for good weather is a good strategy. In talking to many boaters over the years about their experiences, the desire to go against not all odds, but against adverse odds, is common. Internal pressure also comes from a desire not to let down family and friends who are expecting a trip on the water. We are recreational boaters trying to go on a weekend getaway, catch a fish, or land a new wakeboarding trick. All of these things can wait for a favorable weather forecast.

Waiting after fueling up is also a great strategy. In fact, I consider it mandatory. All crew should be offloaded and all hatches closed before fueling. The nozzle should be grounded. When done filling up, the hatches should be opened, the blower should be run for five minutes, and a sniff test of engine space, bilge and cabin should be performed. Then, with only the captain aboard, the engine should be started. Finally, reboard your crew.

Waiting until most of the boats have departed the fireworks display is my go-to strategy. These events happen at night, on a holiday weekend, and concentrate many boats into a small area. Instead of taking off while the embers of the last mortar flutter down, let the fleet split while you wait. Your cruise home will be on calmer, less-crowded waters.

> Certainly, there are times when waiting is not a good approach. Don't wait to administer first aid. Don't wait to rescue a man overboard. Don't wait to perform scheduled maintenance.

VERSUS

The latest installment of our versus franchise pits a Suzuki V-6 200 against a Suzuki inline-4 200. Find out which is best for you on page 82.

Waiting for the tide can be a good strategy. In shallow and unfamiliar waters, waiting for a higher tide will give you more water—and less stress. Also, if you wait for a rising tide, or for slack tide, you will find most coastal inlets calmer and safer and easier to transit.

As an addendum to the above, if you must run a breaking inlet, stand off and observe the wave sets. Waves come in patterns called sets. Count the waves, and observe which ones in the set are smallest. Binoculars help. Time your approach for a smaller set, or for the smaller waves in a set. You might also take this time to hail a local on the VHF and ask whether a certain approach direction is better than another.

If you are pulling up the anchor, have a crewmember idle the boat forward, alternately placing the engine in and out of gear. By doing this and waiting until the rode gets some slack in it, weighing anchor will prove much easier on your arms, back and shoulders.

Make sure your crew waits for your go-ahead when docking. Each year, many eager-to-help nonboating guests get hurt by leaning and reaching far overboard to help before (or even if) their captain needs it.

Certainly, there are times when waiting is not a good approach. Don't wait to administer first aid. Don't wait to rescue a man overboard. Don't wait to perform scheduled maintenance. These, and other urgent situations, don't diminish the value of waiting in other cases.

Enjoy the issue.

Kevin Falvey, Editor-in-Chief
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ON BOARD WITH

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PHOTO: COURTESY HARRY BESLEY

SCAN ME
To read the full interview online, scan this tag or go to boatingmag.com/harry-besley.

Harry Besley

e-RIB Adventurer

On July 13, 2024, 18-year-old Harry Besley left Lyme Regis on the English Channel, aiming to be the first person to circumnavigate Britain in an all-electric boat. He and a rotating crew of friends stopped at more than 45 locations in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland before completing the clockwise round trip on August 14. The team covered 1,708 nautical miles in *Electra*, a 21-foot Galaxy P7 aluminum-hull rigid inflatable boat, which was modified for electric propulsion and powered solely by a 90 kW (120 hp) Evoy Breeze outboard motor. The Evoy system consisted of two 63 kWh liquid-cooled lithium batteries, a 6.6 kW AC charger, a DC fast charger, and a battery-management system that could be remotely monitored. I caught up with Besley for some insight into his epic voyage. *—Capt. John Page Williams*

What prompted you to develop the Round Britain Electric RIB project?
I've been on and around boats since I was 3 years old. For the past couple of years, I've thought a lot about circumnavigating Britain, but I didn't want to burn a lot of petrol making a trip like that. I wanted to show how powerboaters can reduce carbon emissions and promote clean boating.

How did you meet the logistical and training challenges?
The whole process took a couple of years. It was a huge, all-over-Britain team effort. My mother is a deeply experienced project and business manager. Our stakeholders provided invaluable help in planning charging stops. Jim Thomas, a local geography teacher and retired Helm for the Lyme Regis Lifeboat Station for Royal National Lifeboat Institution, was a great help in developing my skills on the water. More than 50 sponsors helped us with everything from seamanship training, electrical systems, shock-absorbing seats, and foul-weather clothing to insurance, fire protection, and funding.

Can you describe some of the joys and challenges?
We loved the dolphins that showed up periodically to play in our wake, and the seals and the puffins. We had to navigate some serious waves, strong winds, and big tidal currents, but I enjoy it when the water is rough. *Electra* is a very able boat, especially with the weight of the batteries that allowed her simply to crush choppy seas. The instant torque of the Evoy electric motor made it easy to handle seas, and our suspension seats helped a lot. Our technical clothing—especially our drysuits—was crucial. All told, it was a great adventure.

SPRING COMMISSIONING

There's no better time of year on a boater's calendar than spring. It's the magic time; winter is over, and it's time to get that boat in the water and enjoy the warm weather. To help ensure a trouble-free launch, let's see how ready you are.

—*John Tiger* (Answers on page 24)

1. You use your trailer often in-season, but off-season, it sits in the driveway with your boat on it. To check it over and maintain it come spring, you should:

A. Check the tires for dry-rot, flat spots and irregularly worn tread.
B. Check the wheel bearings and/or change wheel-bearing grease.
C. Ensure that the decorative decals and stripes on the frame and fenders are intact.
D. Check for worn and/or damaged bunks, rollers and supports.
E. A, B and D
F. All of the above

2. You live in the North. Your boat's been sitting outside all winter, and you're late getting it ready for the boating season; it's been in the 60s and even 70s for a month. What should you be mindful of when removing the winter cover?

A. Uncover slowly and carefully; there are likely wasps' nests and possibly other critters underneath.
B. Watch for frayed and ripped areas of the cover. Take stock of its condition; you might need to repair or replace it for the upcoming summer.
C. If you shrink-wrapped it, carefully cut the retaining rope/strap around the perimeter of the hull, then peel away the shrink-wrap from the boat. Dispose of/recycle the plastic wrap properly.
D. Wash the cover to remove mold, debris and dirt.
E. All of the above

3. Your safety and watersports gear spent the winter in the basement. What are some areas you should examine when cleaning and making ready for summer?

A. Mold and mildew, grease and dirt.
B. Torn or damaged clasps, belts and straps.
C. Worn, damaged covering and exposed flotation material.
D. Dull and discolored stripes, decals and colors.
E. Dry-rotted and frayed ropes, harnesses, and straps.
F. A, B, C and E
G. All of the above

4. What potential problems should you look for on your boat's hull as you clean it for summer use?

A. Cracks and chips in the gelcoat, especially those that expose the fiberglass underneath.
B. Hardened lake scum and waterline stains, which should be removed with appropriate cleaners.
C. Missing or illegible registrations numbers or decals.
D. Damaged rub rail.
E. All of the above

5. A typical spring engine check-over should include:

A. Checking fuel lines for softness, cracking, brittleness, and inner-wall separation from alcohol-extended fuels.
B. Checking belts for proper tension and irregular wear (belt dust and worn belts).
C. Checking all water hoses for deterioration and cracking, and hose clamps for tightness.
D. None of the above; this should have been done during fall layup.
E. All of the above; these are all good items to check in both fall layup and spring recommissioning.

6. If, when checking through-hull fittings, you find cracked and missing sealant and/or broken fittings, you should:

A. Replace any fitting that is suspect, and bed with new sealant.
B. Replace all brass fittings with plastic ones from the hardware store.
C. Turn all fittings to face the bow, to reduce the chance of leakage.
D. None of the above

3

The average distance in miles a person can see to the horizon while standing at sea level. Everything past that disappears beyond the horizon due to the curvature of Earth.

PHOTO: COURTESY DOMETIC; SOURCE FOR STATISTIC: VARIOUS INTERNET SOURCES

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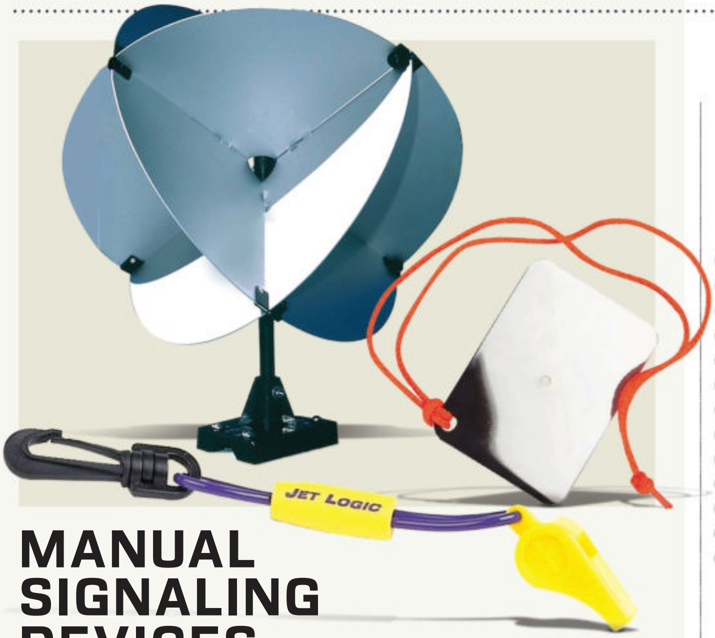


MANUAL SIGNALING DEVICES

Technological advancements have made us all exponentially safer every time we set out on the water, but there's still something to be said for bringing aboard a few inexpensive, tried-and-true safety devices that don't require a power source or any kind of operator instruction. Here are three simple safety devices to keep on board just in case. —*Pete McDonald*

REFLECT
ECHOMASTER
RADAR REFLECTOR

SAVING GRACE: Small boats don't always show up on the radar screens of larger vessels, which could make you invisible to traffic. Adding a radar reflector such as an EchoMaster from Davis Instruments can solve the problem. The standard EchoMaster, when assembled, creates a 12-square-meter cross section visible in the standard 9-9.6 GHz X radar band, making your boat visible to others with radar.

THE SNAG: Must be installed at the highest point on your boat, so small vessels lacking towers or T-tops might not get the full benefit. You could still disappear in another boat's "main bang."

PRICE: $107.99; westmarine.com

SIGNAL
ORION
SIGNALING MIRROR

SAVING GRACE: A signaling mirror fits in your pocket and, in dire situations when all else fails, can be used to reflect the sun's rays to catch the eye of another passing vessel and alert them that you need help. It doesn't cost much, doesn't need batteries, and can catch someone else's attention if you need it. It comes with a lanyard, so you can attach it to your person should you be in the water. The 3-by-4-inch acrylic mirror does not corrode and features rounded corners so that it won't scrape or snag.

THE SNAG: Requires a light source to reflect and, although it could be visible for up to 10 miles, is more for close-range signaling.

PRICE: $15.99; westmarine.com

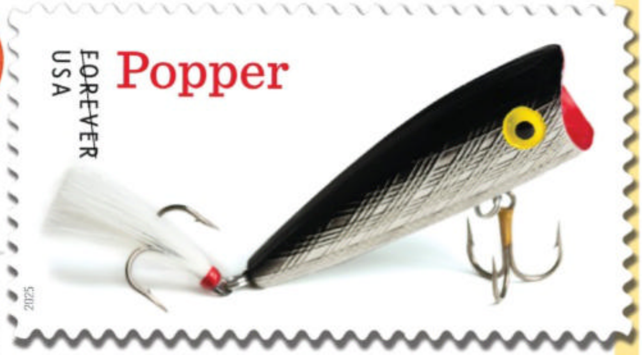
ALERT
JET LOGIC
SAFETY WHISTLE

SAVING GRACE: This high-pitched whistle comes with a floating lanyard that clips to your belt or life vest. It's another inexpensive item that's easy to carry if you need it. If you're stuck adrift or taking on water and can't raise help on your VHF, sometimes a shrill noise can alert a passing vessel that you need help. Again, it doesn't need batteries or maintenance; you just pull it out and blow. Because it's made out of plastic, you don't have to worry about rust or corrosion.

THE SNAG: Might be hard to hear over ambient wind and engine noise, and works only if other vessels are in close proximity to yours.

PRICE: $7.99; westmarine.com

Fishing Goes Postal



The US Postal Service recently released a series of 20 Forever Stamps depicting classic freshwater lures. Greg Breeding, the art director for the USPS, designed the stamps based on the photographs of Sarah Cramer Shields. The stamps, which can be used forever for mailing standard first-class mail weighing up to 1 ounce, depict classic lures that have worked for freshwater anglers for decades all over the country. Lures depicted include a crankbait, popper, painted metal spoon, and a wakebait in the style of a classic jitterbug. The USPS first introduced the freshwater lure stamps at the Bass Pro Shops Wonders of Wildlife Museum and Aquarium in Springfield, Missouri, and are available to the public as of March 13. —*PM*

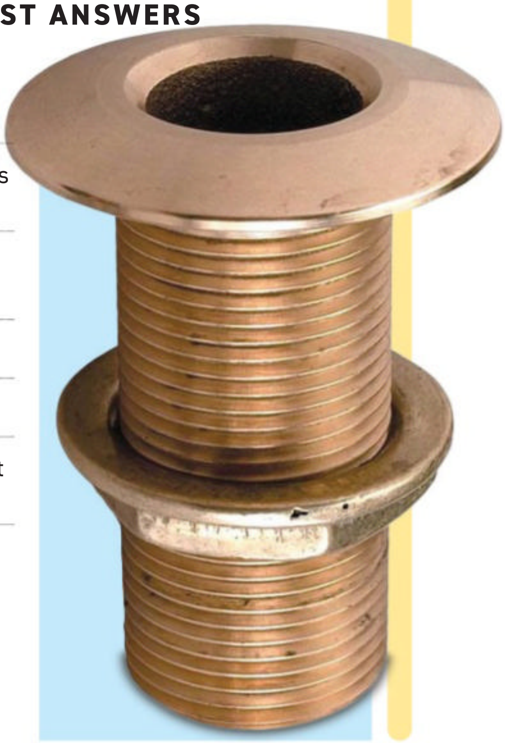
CAPTAIN'S TEST ANSWERS

(Answers from page 22)

1. E. A, B and D are all good checks.
2. E. All of the answers are correct.
3. F. A, B, C and E are all correct.
4. E. All of the above.
5. E. All of the above.
6. A is the only correct answer.

CAPTAIN'S TESTS ONLINE

Test your knowledge of boating with more Captain's Tests at boatingmag.com/captains-test.



PHOTOS: COURTESY WEST MARINE (4), COURTESY USPS (POSTAGE STAMP)

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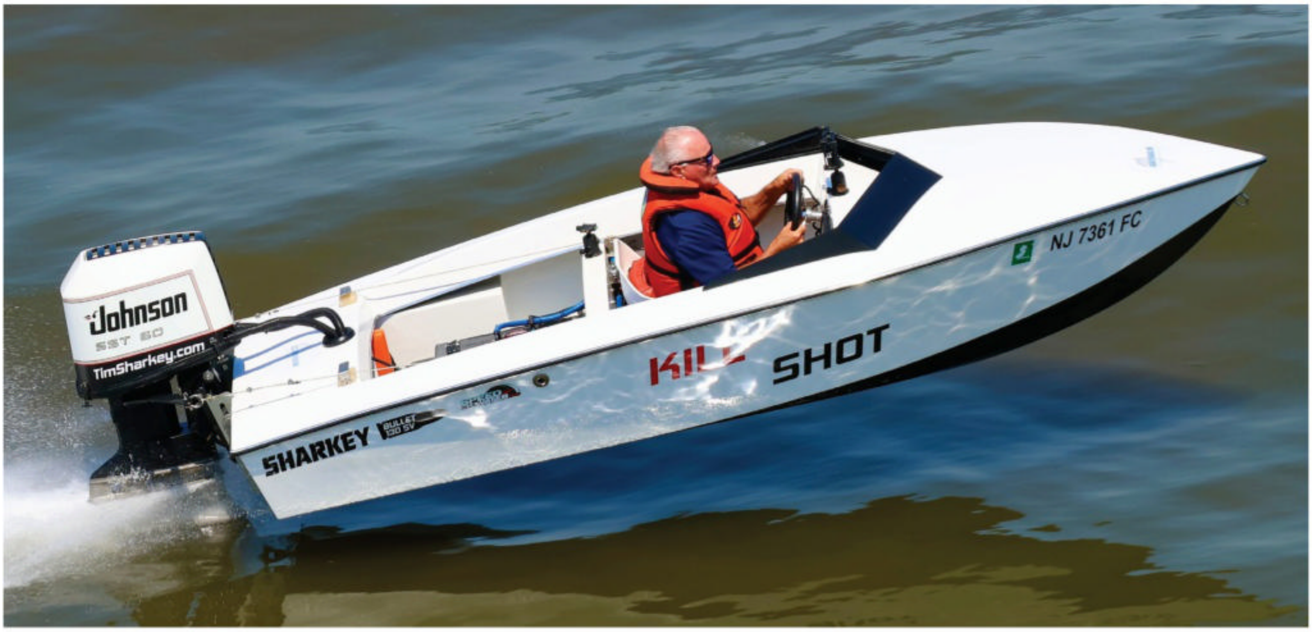
Retro Race on the Hudson



Inspired by historical races on the Hudson River and his love of classic boats, noted marine photographer and offshore racer Tim Sharkey is planning an epic run this fall aboard a 1985 Bullet 130 SV named *Kill Shot*. On September 13, weather permitting, Sharkey, who has shot photography for *Boating* many times over the years, plans to make the run from the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor all the way up to the New York state capital in Albany, on the Hudson River.

Sharkey actually used to work for Bullet as a boatbuilder, so he would have worked on the 130 SV that he recently purchased and restored. He powered his classic Bullet with a vintage Johnson SST60 racing outboard, restored by frequent *Boating* contributor and outboard guru John Tiger. OMC built the three-cylinder engine with a 56 cid, known for its high power-to-weight ratio, specifically for the American Powerboat Association's (APBA) SST60 outboard racing class, and used to be a staple on the small-boat racing circuit.

Why run the Hudson River? It used to be a popular racing route, including several events that Sharkey participated in through the APBA. (Historical records show early hydroplane races held on the Hudson River dating back at least as far as 1904.) Restoring *Kill Shot* inspired Sharkey to make the run again, this time in memory of multitime offshore-racing champion Joe Sgro, the former president of Outer Limits Offshore Powerboats who passed away in a poker run accident in 2017. Sgro remains a legend in the racing community and an inspiration to Sharkey.

"Joe would supply his helicopter to me when I shot the Hudson River Fall Fun Runs," Sharkey says. "When I raced offshore, he was also my competitor in B-Class."

The trip from New York Harbor along the Hudson River to Albany is around 150 miles upriver. Sharkey estimates that the run will take around three hours, with an expected cruising speed of 50 mph. *Kill Shot* has a 22-gallon fuel tank, and Sharkey plans to carry an extra 5-gallon tank in reserve, just in case. Stay tuned for full social-media coverage and a feature story detailing Sharkey's feat as it goes down this fall. For more information, go to timsharkey.com/blog/2025/1/statue-of-liberty-to-albany-ny-endurance-run. *—PM*

ONLINE THIS MONTH

BOATING

38 Top Make-Ready Tips for the Spring Boating Season

Top boat launch tips to make sure you'll be ready for adventure.

By Ed Sherman | Updated: March 8, 2024

LAUNCH TIME

If you live in a region where seasonal boating is the norm, it's time to take the shrink-wrap off your boat and get it ready to launch. Read our 38 timeless tips for spring commissioning by scanning this tag or visiting boatingmag.com/how-to/top-spring-make-ready-tips-for-your-boat/?srsltid=AfmBOoqCZUOURGx_LNdtbe4lbWv-YeeQJi9oQH3kno4xnFvJN4CEUTYz.

PHOTO: COURTESY TIM SHARKEY

CENTER CONSOLES: 273CC | 253CC | 236CC | 216CC | 206CC | 173CC

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By Kevin Falvey

HURRICANE
CENTER CONSOLE 24 OB

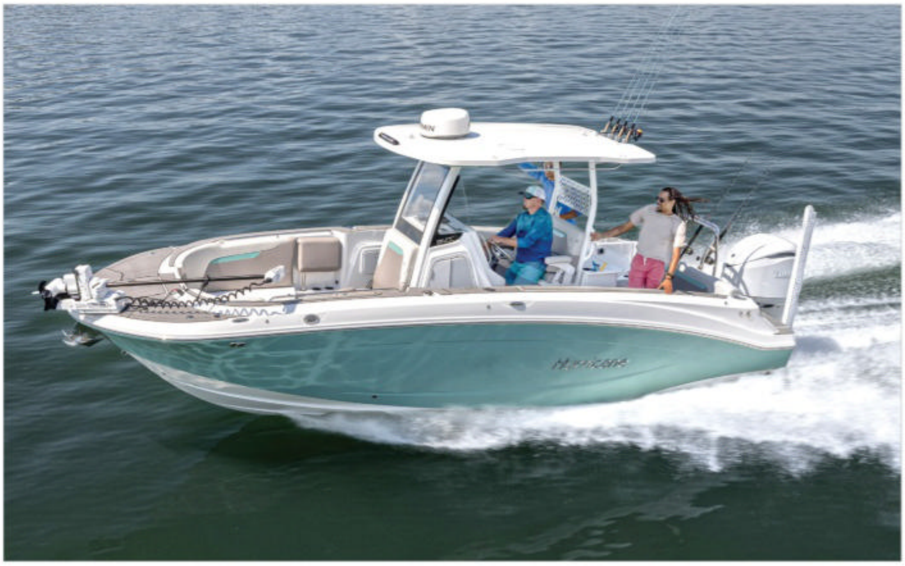

PHOTO: COURTESY HURRICANE BOATS

Hurricane's versatile new model offers the sporty feel of running the boat from centerline and slightly aft, while offering wide-open deck spaces and a beamy shallow-draft hull.

It's no secret that the center-console layout enables the skipper the ability to quickly get anywhere on the boat—to the bow for docking or aft to gaff a fish—quickly and easily. Additionally, the visibility afforded in all directions aboard a CC is unparalleled. Hurricane capitalized on these traits and added even more aboard its new Center Console 24 OB.

Built into the back of the leaning post is a 23-gallon above-deck livewell and rigging station. The Fishing Package includes a trolling-motor harness, pump-out boxes and stainless-steel accents. U-shaped seating in the wide bow allows removing the cushions to create a raised casting area. The functional helm is fitted with rugged switches, as well as room for features (some optional) such as large MFD screens, satellite radio and joystick control.

You can select your choice of a single outboard between 150 and 400 hp from Honda, Mercury, Suzuki or Yamaha. The Center Console 24 OB's starting price (MSRP) is $100,814.

· **LOA:** 24'2" · **BEAM:** 8'10" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 5,500 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 100 gal.

HURRICANE BOATS
Elkhart, Indiana; hurricaneboats.com

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FIRST IMPRESSION

By Kevin Falvey

PHENOM
43 CENTER CONSOLE

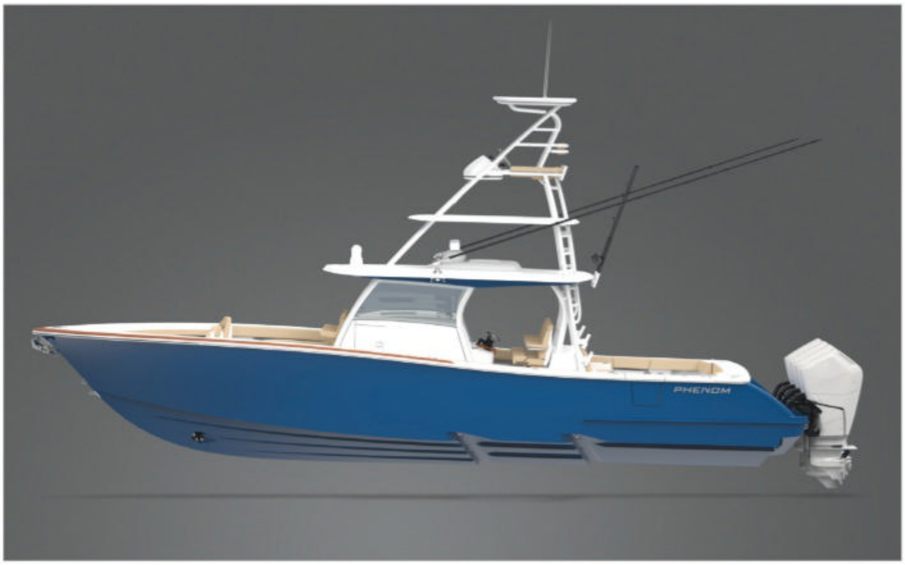

PHOTO: COURTESY PHENOM YACHTS

The Phenom 43 Center Console embodies the pillars of family, fishing, luxury and performance. Its lines tell a part of its story, indicating a seaworthy vessel derived from shapes having proved to excel on the deep blue.

Phenom builds a unique hull form, said to deliver enhanced efficiency with a wider hull that allows more amenities to be incorporated aboard. From a special step-vent design to the keel flat with a transducer pocket to the three strakes for lift and tracking, the Phenom Nex-Step three-piece hull is unique.

Notable standards include a fiberglass leaning post with aft-facing mezzanine seats, hardtop with D-tubing frame, matching hardtop underside color, and a bow thruster. Belowdecks, you'll find amenities such as a convertible queen-size berth and a full galley.

Phenom offers personalization as well. The range of Garmin electronics is available, as is Starlink communications. Select a Release Marine pod or chairs. Or maybe a custom tower and outriggers. In short, you can make the 43 Center Console your own.

The Phenom 43 Center Console starts at $1.25 million, with your choice of quad Mercury 400s or triple Mercury 600s.

· **LOA:** 43'0" · **BEAM:** 12'10" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 19,200 lb. · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 700 gal.

PHENOM YACHTS
Summerville, South Carolina; phenomyachts.com

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KORKERS THERMO BOOTS

The Neo Flex Thermo ankle boots from Korkers offer a fusion of cozy slipperlike comfort with rugged, waterproof hand-laid rubber-over-neoprene outers for cold, wet days on deck. Rated for minus-20 degrees F, they feature a proprietary Cush-Tech premium underfoot cushioning and Kling-On Grip performance outsoles. The slip-on fleece-lined boots are available in men's sizes 8 to 14 in black or gray. $144.99; korkers.com

SEASUCKER STARLINK MOUNTS

SeaSucker offers two new suction-cup kits for mounting Starlink satellite dishes on boats. One is for horizontally mounting a Starlink high-performance dish, with or without the wedge base. The other is for the Starlink pole mount, accommodating both vertical and angled locations. Both use SeaSucker's 4.5-inch vacuum-mounting suction cups, which provide 120 pounds of adherence for long periods, in any weather. The Starlink dish-mounting kit uses four such mounts, while the pole-mounting model uses three. $199 and $175, respectively; seasucker.com

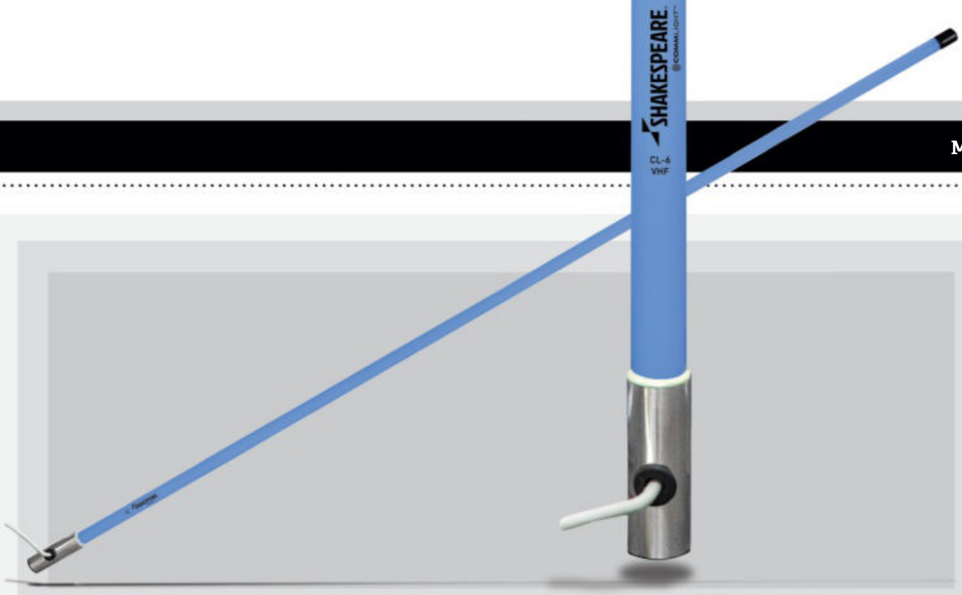
BANSHEE UNDERGUNWALE SPEAKERS

Banshee Marine Audio's undergunwale speaker systems include speaker arrays in a pair of tuned enclosures. Engineered specifically for marine audio applications, the undergunwale design eliminates the need to cut holes in inwales or bulkheads to mount speakers. Each enclosure houses two 4-inch drivers and one horn-loaded tweeter, with all of the speakers facing downward. $299 per set of two; banshee.rocks

FLIR OCEAN SCOUT PRO

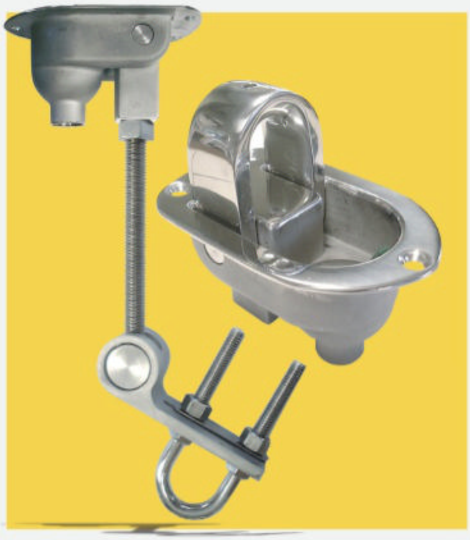
The compact new Ocean Scout Pro handheld thermal-imaging scope from FLIR provides a 500-meter detection range and a 32-degree field of view to enhance nighttime boating safety. A one-finger button controls zoom, brightness, stand-by and more. It also gives you the option to shoot photos and record videos. It integrates a wireless app to manage and transfer files. The scope boasts an IP67 rating, and the battery lasts for six hours on a single charge. There are four viewing palettes. $2,395; flir.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY KORKERS, COURTESY SEASUCKER, COURTESY FLIR, COURTESY BANSHEE MARINE AUDIO



SHAKESPEARE ILLUMINATED ANTENNA

Here's something truly new in VHF antennas: the Comm-Light illuminated CL-6 antenna from Shakespeare Marine. Lighting includes the full RGB spectrum and pulsating modes with adjustable patterns and speeds to give your boat a colorful flair and enhance the visibility of your vessel at night. It also includes multiple presets. Easy to install, the 6.5-foot 6-decibel antenna mounts on a standard ratchet mount (1-inch diameter, 14 threads per inch) and includes a 15-foot RG-58 coax cable with a PL-259 connector. There's also 25-foot 12-volt power cable for the lighting system, which is controlled via the Shakespeare Comm-Light mobile app. $269.99; shakespeare-marine.com



ACCON FOLD-DOWN LIFTING EYE

The Accon Marine oval lifting eye not only supports up to 4,000 pounds, but it also folds flat to maintain a clean, obstruction-free deck when not in use. It needs less clearance under the deck than conventional lifting cleats and pivots in two directions to overcome slight misalignments at installation. It includes an integrated bow eye and has an integrated drain that can be sealed or routed to the bilge via a small hose. $338.88 for complete assembly; acconmarine.com

SCHMITT GRAB RAIL

Need to add a grab rail? One solution is the Schmitt Marine 9-inch grab rail. Offered in top- and under-mounting versions, you can add this handsome yet practical grip just about anywhere on the boat. The 316-cast stainless steel is polished to a mirrorlike finish, and a black Santoprene rubber insert provides a solid, comfortable handgrip, even when wet. Flaps in the rubber insert of the top-mounting version lift up to provide access for through-bolting ¼-20 mounting hardware. The under-mounting model installs from below using threaded studs. $90; schmittmarine.com

STRIKER SHIELD FLOAT VEST

The Striker Shield Float Vest is designed with Thermadex for wind-blocking protection and thermal insulation to help warm up boaters on cold-weather days. Oh, and one more benefit: It provides Sureflote flotation for safety in case of a man-overboard situation. The vest is low-profile, lightweight and flexible for all-day comfort. A safety-stop lanyard can be attached to a special cord loop when at the wheel. It can be worn as both an outer layer or as an insulating midlayer, making it a practical three-season option for whichever adventure you choose. $129.99 to $149.99; strikerbrands.com

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY SHAKESPEARE, COURTESY STRIKER, COURTESY SCHMITT MARINE, COURTESY ACCON MARINE

By Kevin Falvey

FIRST RUN

There is value in routine, especially during spring commissioning, when out of sight often means out of mind.

The definition of seamanship is apparently a matter of contention among some boaters, including other marine journalists not working for this publication. I will settle the matter right now: To practice seamanship means, in part, to practice good preparation. Seamanship is not limited to acts of high adventure on stormy seas.

Now that that's resolved, let's examine why boaters who winterize—or who store their boats otherwise—for months at a time should develop a routine for that first run of the season.

First, I never met a boat that wasn't a work in progress. There's always one or more tasks that need to be done or that are not 100 percent completed and one or more items that have failed or are about to fail. It's the nature of the beast. Break out those Benjamins. Some of these tasks might be aesthetic and some might be critical. Along that spectrum, first-run boaters should make a checklist prioritizing critical items and working toward aesthetic.

Here's my main point: Things that were in process or top of mind before you laid up the boat have had time to sink into the mire of disuse and distraction. Other things take up space in our brains. The holidays, house projects that got delayed while you were boating, plus the simple passage of time can all push boating tasks and repairs beyond recollection. So, make a list.

Start with safety: Check your flares for sufficient number and type as well as for expiration dates. Check your life jackets by pulling on the straps and tugging at the buckles, rearming the inflation mechanism, and noting whether any of your regular crew have grown over the winter and so now need a new size. Does the horn work? Do the nav lights work? Does your EPIRB, PLB or other beacon need a battery? Perform a self-test on these per the manufacturer's procedure.

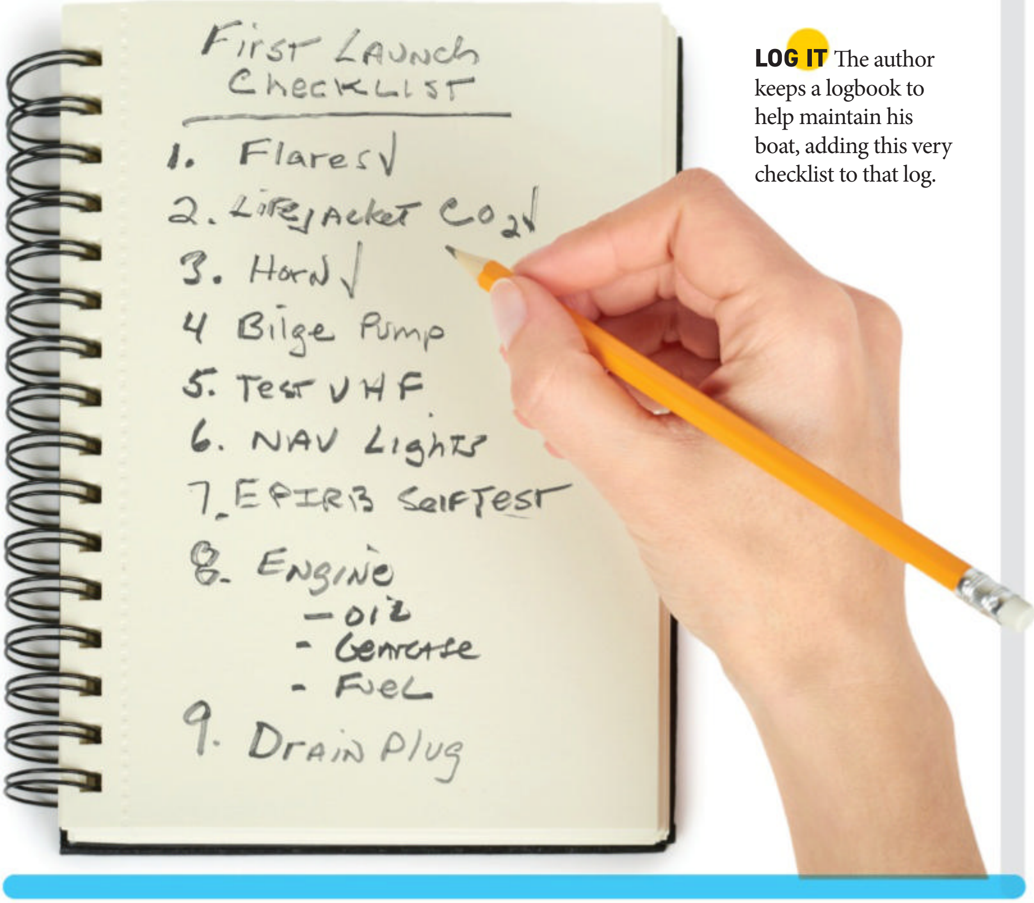
Other accessories that I'd give priority to include the VHF radio. Make sure it works by either requesting a radio check, radio-checking yourself with a handheld VHF, or by installing an inline wattmeter on the antenna cable (these come ready to go for easy installation).

Checking the bilge pump probably works as well in the safety paragraph, but I needed a good transition. Reach into the bilge and raise the pump's float switch, and also check for manual operation by flipping the switch at the helm. What about livewell and washdown pumps? Better to find out before you launch, so check 'em out now.

Let's not forget propulsion. More than one boater shows up for spring launch with an engine that won't start. Or won't shift. Or otherwise doesn't run right. Connect a hose, and fire off the engines in the yard or on the trailer. Shift gears. Check the alternator output, oil pressure and fluid levels before you head out for your first run.

This list is not intended to be complete for every boat. Nor is it an indictment of every boater. Instead, I'm hoping to provide you with a head start. I want to prompt you to think about your first run before you make it. Much of good seamanship is mindset and routine.

And don't forget your drain plug.



First Launch
Checklist

1. Flares ✓
2. LifeJacket CO_2 ✓
3. Horn ✓
4 Bilge Pump
5. Test VHF
6. NAV Lights
7. EPIRB SelfTest
8. Engine
    - oil
    - Generator
    - Fuel
9. Drain Plug

LOG IT The author keeps a logbook to help maintain his boat, adding this very checklist to that log.

PHOTOS: SVIATOSLAV KOVTUN / ADOBE STOCK; KEVIN FALVEY (CHECKLIST)

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Q&A

By
Michael "Mick"
Hannock

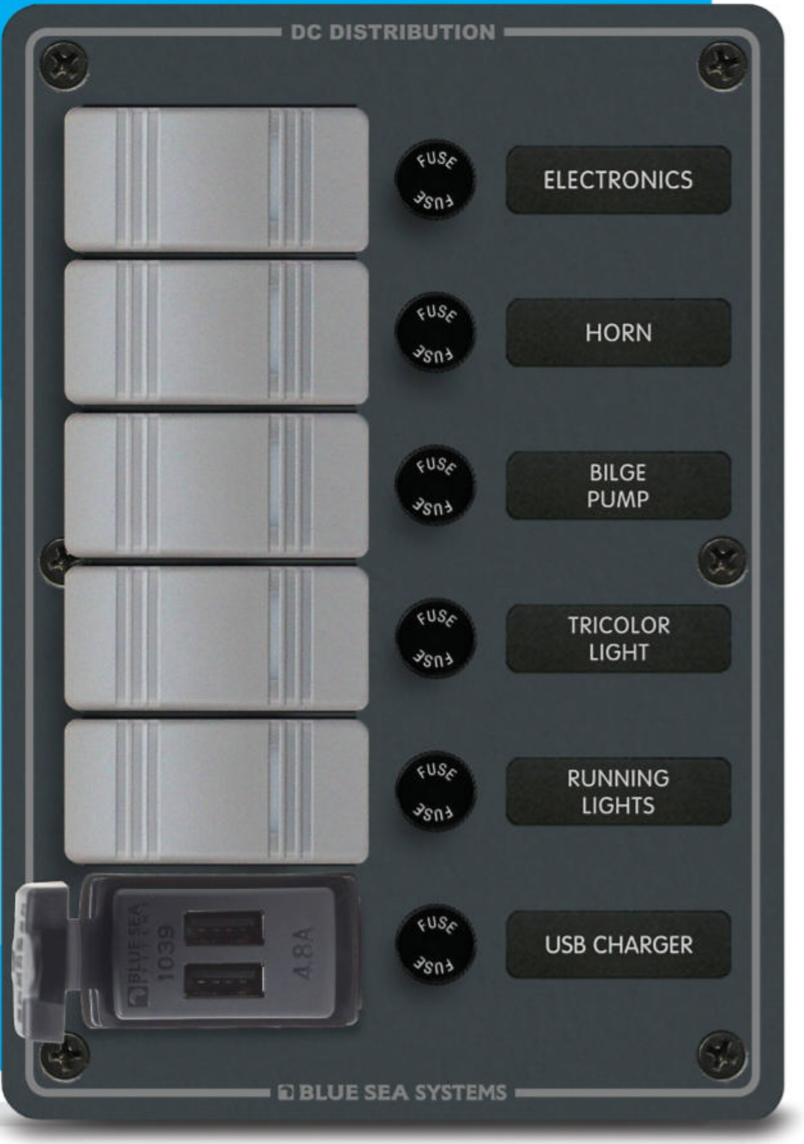
FLICK OF THE SWITCH Toggle switches, once common aboard boats, have been supplanted by button and rocker switches.

ROCK ON

Q: Dear Doc, do you prefer rocker switches or toggle switches for use in marine accessory panels at the helm?

Mathiesen Owens
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

A: I prefer rocker switches. Rockers are more resistant to physical damage, being lower profile and thicker than toggles. For example, if you accidentally brace yourself against the panel coming off a wave, the rocker switches will take it better. Electrically, they are the same. Get illuminated switches, whichever type you choose, and use a button for the horn.



PHOTOS: COURTESY BLUE SEA SYSTEMS (2)

DROP-IN ROD-HOLDER SWIVELS As deep-drop ocean fishing has grown in popularity, so have electric reels on rods that stay in a gunwale rod holder while fishing. Yet, once you retrieve the line, grabbing a fish and the heavy sinker, which can weigh up to 9 pounds, can be awkward and even dangerous. Swiveling rod holders, such as Lee's swivel-base rod holder ($123.53, hodgesmarine.com), let you swing the rod tip inboard to secure your fish and sinker. If you'd rather not install new rod holders, you can use a drop-in swivel for an existing rod holder. (Make sure the rod holder is installed with bolts and a backing plate.) Nearly all drop-in swivels are constructed from stainless steel for corrosion resistance. They are available from a variety of sources, from Boat Outfitters ($59.99, boatoutfitters.com) to Amazon ($14.67, amazon.com). *—Jim Hendricks*

OH, SNAP!

Q: Dear Boat Doctor, how hard is it to replace a snap? I am a new boater. Thanks.

Terrence Beattie
Sandusky, Ohio

A: Generally, it is easy to replace a snap. If you need a new snap on the boat, you can often simply screw in a new one. If you need to replace a snap in canvas, there are kits that make this simple and inexpensive.

The devil is in the details. If the fiberglass is damaged, or if the Bimini top or boat cover is torn where you need to put a snap, more work will be required. This will still often be in the DIY realm. Check out the snaps section at a marine-supply store or even online. I think doing so will make it clear that snap replacement is often a simple task.

Good luck, and enjoy the new boat!

CORE PROBLEM

Q: Dear Doc, after a storm, the deck near one of my cleats was damaged. It was pointed out to me that the cored deck had rotted, or gotten wet, and that was why it had failed. I am having a glass shop repair the damage, but they are recommending removing and recaulking all the load-bearing fittings on the boat. What do you think?

Frank Blucher
Wilton Manors, Florida

A: Cored fiberglass must be kept dry, especially if the coring is plywood, balsa or other wood. Specific situations vary, but it is good maintenance to rebed deck hardware every eight to 10 years. Even noncored structures can benefit from this because doing so heads off potential leaks, but it is more important for cored structures so that rot from water does not take a foothold.

SALTWATER WASH?

Q: Dear Doc, we keep our boat on a mooring. While we can access a hose ashore and rinse the boat there before heading to the mooring, we don't always have time. Can we wash the boat with salt water? It is a fishing boat.

Ward Stanwyck
Norwalk, Connecticut

A: You can rinse your boat with salt water to remove stains, bird droppings, etc. There are even soaps that will lather in salt water. However, it will be better served by a freshwater rinse. I suggest making the time to use the shore hose and carrying a garden sprayer filled with fresh water aboard for those times you can't get to the hose.

DIFFERENT GREASES?

Q: Should I be using different greases on different parts of my boat and trailer? Can't I use the same grease everywhere?

Jon Johnson
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Sierra
Marine Engine and Drive Parts
Sierra Hydro Defense
Marine Grease
MARINE
GREASE WITH PTFE
GRAISSE MARINE
AVEC PTFE/GRASA
MARINA CON PTFE

A: Let's be clear: We are talking about grease and not about other lubricants such as aerosols or others. For most applications, a high-temperature waterproof marine grease will serve you as well in your trailer's wheel bearing as it will on your engine and other places. One thing I do not recommend is mixing grease types. If you half-fill a fitting with one type, use the same type to finish the job.

WET FEET

Q: Dear Boat Doc, we bought a used boat and have enjoyed it very much. The boat is a self-bailing design, yet when two people are in the stern, water comes into the scupper drains. This is fine in summer but was a pain in the fall, when we were beyond flip-flops and bare-feet weather. We'd like to address this before spring boating begins. Can we plug those drains without compromising safety?

Jen and Thom Burke
Pompton Lakes, New Jersey

A: I am always hesitant offering this kind of advice. I don't know you, and you haven't even told me the boat model. The builder designed the boat to be a certain way. This might be "better" or "worse" than other boats, but most builders today are not building unsafe boats. Modifying systems, such as cockpit drainage, has to be done with an understanding of the pluses and minuses. For instance, should you plug the scuppers while fishing, you won't have wet feet, but if you forget to pull the plugs while the boat is docked, it might swamp in a rainstorm.

That said, you can plug the scuppers as long as you remember to remove them for drainage when needed, including when you encounter rough water. Another thing boaters in your situation do is install valves on the scuppers if there is a hose between the cockpit and the transom or hull side. Again, you need to remember to operate the valves. Finally, there are passive valves that can be installed on the outside of the scuppers. These use a captive pingpong ball that floats up and blocks the scupper should it get submerged (like when two people go to the back of your boat). You need to check these regularly for blockage from debris or fouling to make sure they are operating correctly.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY VEVOR, COURTESY SIERRA INTERNATIONAL

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POLISH OR COMPOUND

Q: Dear Boat Doctor, my hull's finish is somewhat faded, and I'd like to restore some of its lost luster. Should I use a polish, a compound or a color restorer? The shelves are full of seemingly similar products. Is one better than another?

Dane Hoogart
Minneapolis

A: Yes, one is indeed better than another. Which one that is depends on the condition of your hull.

Simply stated, these different polishes, compounds, cleaner waxes and color restorers all have one thing in common in that they possess some grit. This grit scratches the outer oxidized (faded) layer of paint or gelcoat to reveal the fresh, bright color underneath.

The difference between these products is the amount of grit. More grit is required to restore more-heavily-oxidized finishes. On the other hand, a product with a finer grit can be applied without delivering any noticeable effect. As a rule of thumb only, compounds and color restorers are more aggressive than polishes and cleaner waxes. It's generally best to select the product that will complete the job with the least grit. Doing so means less color is removed from the boat's surface. Also, aggressive compounds can damage a finish if improperly applied.

So, how does a DIY boater know which product to use since most don't have experience reviving the finishes of multiple boats? Start with a less aggressive polish or cleaner wax. If that doesn't give acceptable results, try a more aggressive compound or color restorer, but do so in a small area first to see how the product affects the finish.

In all cases, read the directions and be sure to wear a face mask or respirator when compounding and polishing, lest you breath in microscopic particles of gelcoat or paint.

HANDS DOWN

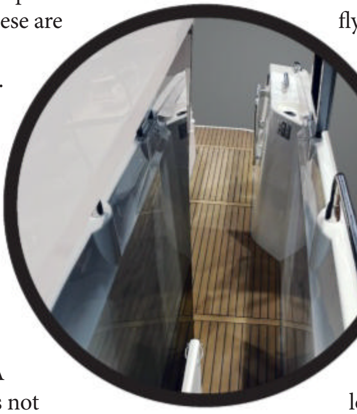
Q: Dear Boat Doctor, when washing my boat, I notice that some of the smooth surfaces don't get clean with a brush. If I wipe these areas with my hand, they come clean. Why is this?

Butch Pakula
Havre de Grace, Maryland

A: Some grime is fine, and brush bristles don't catch them all. A soft-bristle brush will often do the trick in these areas, as will a mop. Either works for when you need the reach of a handle. For other times, a rag or a sponge—or yes, your bare hand—often works great.

NAUTICAL
NO-NO

NO GRAB RAIL



Grab rails are an important safety feature aboard any boat. There are stringent regulations for where grab rails or handholds must be placed and how they must be installed. These are stated in the American Boat & Yacht Council Standards H-41. Generally, most seating areas, and areas where people need to move around a boat, are required to have handrails installed.

There are exceptions, though.

The accompanying photo shows the side deck aboard a 40-foot flying-bridge cruiser. A grab rail along the cabin side is not required here because the bow railing, or "perimeter rail," is just high enough (just above my knees) to meet another section of the H-41 Standard and so creates an exception. I can say, though, that while walking up to the bow of this boat, the cabin structure forces a sort of slight lean outboard as one's shoulder brushes the flying-bridge skirt. Turning sideways mitigates that effect, but balance then takes a hit. This was on dry land at a boat show. In the water, even at idle speed, were I charged with handling lines or fenders at the bow, I would want a grab rail on the cabin to make coming and going safer via this side deck.

When shopping for a boat, look for grab rails, and think about where you might need them aboard. Rails and handholds are readily available aftermarket items and can be installed after purchase, or by your dealer, prior to delivery.
—*Kevin Falvey*

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY STAR BRITE, KEVIN FALVEY, COURTESY SHURHOLD INDUSTRIES

FORMULA

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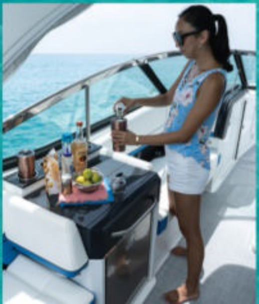

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TWIN ENGINES OR ONE?

Q: Dear Doc, my boat, a 26 Regulator, can be made to plane and achieve about 25 mph with just one engine running and the other tilted out of the water. I consider this a good safety feature because I can get home faster if weather comes up or a member of my crew is injured. However, a friend said that running on one might damage my engine. What do you say?

Ray Haller
Melville, New York

A: I too like the ability of a twin-outboard boat to plane on one engine. The way to do this is as you do, by tilting the dead engine up out of the water to decrease its drag. (Inboard boats are a different matter; I would not try planing a twin inboard on one engine.)

For all of that, I would do it only in an emergency, as you state. If the weather is not threatening, and no other circumstance requires speed, I would come home at trolling speed on the one engine. Remember that with one engine, you have only one gear case holding up the boat instead of two, so it is under more strain. Also, if the engine is propped correctly for a twin installation, it is probably not propped right to run as a single, and you could overload (“lug”) the one engine, which can possibly damage it.

PETTIT PROP COAT BARNACLE BARRIER

I keep my boat in the water for eight months per year, so I need good antifouling protection. To protect my trim tabs last year, I applied two coats of Pettit Prop Coat Barnacle Barrier. At haulout, the tabs were in great shape. Other antifouling coatings I have applied to trim tabs wash off three-quarters of the way through a season. Prop Coat Barnacle Barrier was still evident. It is not an antifouling, per se, but rather a zinc-rich coating that dries super-hard to create a self-cleaning surface.

The top of my tabs, especially, are usually furry with grass and sport some big barnacles at haulout. But I discovered only a couple of small barnacles and a few wisps of grass. I can recommend this product, and while I can’t test for it aboard my outboard boat, the way it held up to the “washing action” on trim tabs makes me suspect it will perform well protecting inboard propellers and running gear.

I will be reapplying this year, and testing the multiseason system, which is comprised of two coats of Prop Coat Barnacle Barrier followed by two coats of antifouling paint—in my case, Pettit Trinidad XSR. Stay tuned.

WE TEST STUFF
PETTIT
PROP COAT BARNACLE BARRIER
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PROTECTS UNDERWATER METALS
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PROP COAT BARNACLE BARRIER
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PROTECTS UNDERWATER METALS

Pettit Prop Coat Barnacle Barrier is available in 20-ounce aerosol cans and in quart cans ($37.24 and $114. 07, respectively); jamestowndistributors.com —*KF*

DOES BOTTOM PAINT MATTER?

Q: I recently read the article on *Boating*’s website about redoing a boat bottom after paint has built up for a number of years. Do you really think this job is worth doing?

John Hallock
Springfield, Massachusetts

BOTTOM JOB Antifouling paint buildup robs efficiency and effectiveness.

A: As traditional, non-ablative bottom paint builds up after many seasons, the boater faces several problems. One is that the craters and crevices in the finish make it easier for fouling to occur. Applied antifouling falls off when old layers peel and flake, allowing fouling. Efficiency is affected, even if fouling is kept at bay, because of the rough cratered surface. Overall efficiency won’t be drastically affected, but the condition of the bottom is one of several factors that adds up to better speed and efficiency.

So, yes, I believe that a redo—in which the bottom is blasted clean, smoothed, and sealed—is worth it when the paint buildup gets to the point of craters and pockmarks.

TRAILER-WHEEL CHECKS

Q: Dear Doc, I have been boating my whole life but just now started trailering. I am getting the hang of it, but I have a question. What should I check before I head out on the trailer?

Jason Bernstein
Marshfield, Massachusetts

A: Make sure the hitch is securely seated on the hitch ball and that the lights are connected and working; connect your safety chains. Next, ensure that the tires are at proper inflation, plus examine the wheels and tires for cuts, fraying, sidewall damage, loose or missing lug nuts, etc. Make sure the boat is sitting properly on the trailer and that it is tied down—including the winch strap to the bow eye and transom straps to the stern eyes—and that both are good condition. You should also have a safety chain or cable from the trailer bow stop to the boat’s bow eye. Make sure to lower any antennas and to secure and stow any loose items on deck that might blow out while on the road. Drive carefully, similar to operating the boat, and anticipate, anticipate, anticipate.

Happy trailer-boating!

ASK THE DOCTOR

Send questions to Mick with your name and boating location to boatdr@boatingmag.com.

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY PETTIT MARINE PAINT, KEVIN FALVEY

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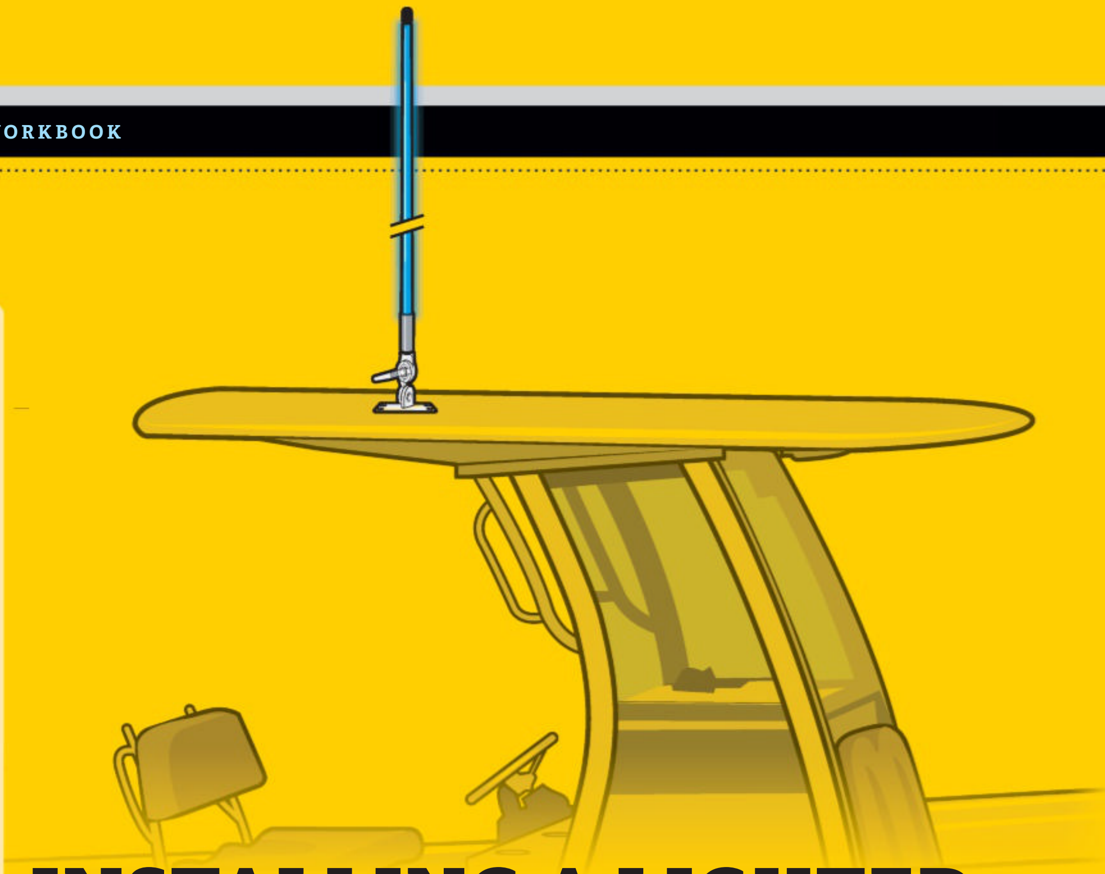


INSTALLING A LIGHTED VHF ANTENNA

Shakespeare's new CommLight antenna adds illuminated flair to nighttime boating.

Marine VHF antennas have not changed much since VHF radios were adopted by recreational boaters in the 1960s. We have seen improved durability and materials, optimized transmission and reception range, and enhanced mounting systems. Yet, the function of a VHF antenna has remained much the same—until now.

Shakespeare Marine, a long-established leader in marine antennas, has reimagined what a VHF antenna can be with the new CommLight. The 6.5-foot tall, 6 dB gain, and 5 MHz bandwidth CL-6 antenna not only offers outstanding transmission and reception capabilities, but it is also the first antenna to offer LED lighting. Controlled with a mobile app, boaters can adjust the vibrant glow of the antenna across the full RGB color spectrum and cue up flashing modes and adjust the pulse speed. It has multiple presets, and the CL-6 can sync its changing colors to the tempo of downloaded music.

Lighting aside, the CL-6 features brass and copper elements for range and reception, a corrosion-resistant stainless-steel ferrule designed to fit a standard threaded (1-inch diameter/14 threads per inch) ratchet mount, a durable high-gloss PMMA antenna finish, a 15-foot RG-58 coaxial cable with a PL-259 connector, and a 25-foot two-piece power cable with a controller that connects wirelessly to your mobile device.

Because you need to route and install both a standard coax cable and a power cable, retrofitting your boat with the CL-6 differs a bit from installing a replacement VHF antenna, but this DIY project is still fairly easy. *—Jim Hendricks*

SKILL LEVEL

2 OF 5

FINISH TIME

Approx. 3-4 hours

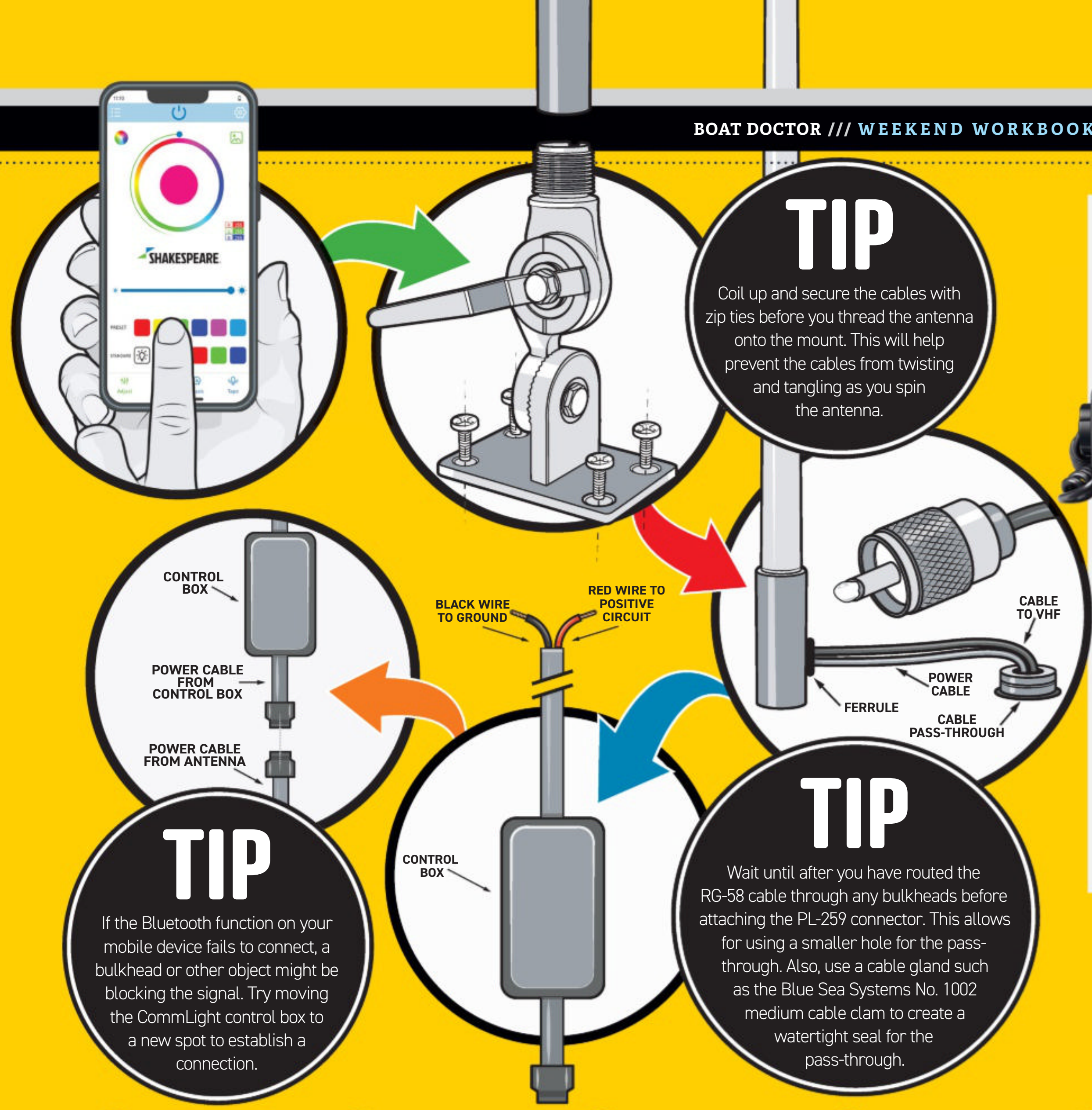
TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- Shakespeare Marine CommLight VHF antenna ($199.95; thegpsstore.com)
- Shakespeare Marine 4187 or 4187-HD ratchet mount ($49.68 and $55.96, respectively; hodgesmarine.com)
- Power drill and bit set
- Phillips screwdriver
- Socket wrench and box/open wrench sets
- Solder gun
- Resin-core solder
- Marine crimp terminals with heat-shrink collars
- Heavy-duty self-adhesive 1-inch Velcro strips
- Crimping tool
- Heat gun
- Zip ties
- Blue Sea Systems medium cable clam No. 1002 ($24.99; westmarine.com)

NOT A NAV LIGHT

In case you were thinking about it, Shakespeare Marine's CommLight is not intended, nor is it approved, for use as a navigation light. This is because it does not meet the requirements of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, commonly called 72 COLREGS. It is just for fun and showing off some bling during harbor cruises at night.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM HATCH



TIP

Coil up and secure the cables with zip ties before you thread the antenna onto the mount. This will help prevent the cables from twisting and tangling as you spin the antenna.

TIP

If the Bluetooth function on your mobile device fails to connect, a bulkhead or other object might be blocking the signal. Try moving the CommLight control box to a new spot to establish a connection.

TIP

Wait until after you have routed the RG-58 cable through any bulkheads before attaching the PL-259 connector. This allows for using a smaller hole for the pass-through. Also, use a cable gland such as the Blue Sea Systems No. 1002 medium cable clam to create a watertight seal for the pass-through.

DOWNLOAD THE APP Before getting started, it's a good idea to download the free Shakespeare CommLight app on your mobile device. For Android, visit Google Play; for iPhones, go to the App Store. Once it's on your phone, scroll through the functions, which include the on/off button at the top of the homepage, connecting to Bluetooth, a color wheel, pulsating and flashing color modes, music-sync mode, brightness and more. Having the app on your phone ahead of time will allow you to confirm that the illumination system is operational before you finalize the installation and button up everything on your boat.

MOUNT THE ANTENNA If you do not already have an existing VHF antenna on your boat, choose a mounting location that is as high as possible (such as on a hardtop), free from obstructions, and as far as possible from any other antennas. Use a Shakespeare 4187 or 4187-HD or similar ratchet mount (sold separately), and follow the directions with the mount that you have chosen. If your boat has an existing VHF antenna that you are planning to use with the CL-6, remove the old antenna completely, and then thread the ferrule of the new antenna onto the ratchet mount, and tighten by hand. Do not use pliers; they can scratch the ferrule.

ROUTE THE CABLES Route the RG-58 and power cables from the antenna through the same pass-through that you used for the previous antenna. Once through, route the RG-58 cable to the VHF radio, keeping it away from electrical equipment and other cables. Roll the cable in a coil of at least 8 inches, and stow it out of the way. Install the PL-259 connector (supplied) on the RG-58 cable according to the connector's instructions. These call for soldering the connector to the cable. For a video tutorial on soldering on a PL-259 connector, visit youtube.com/watch?v=_iy4W03GnBk on *Boating*'s YouTube channel.

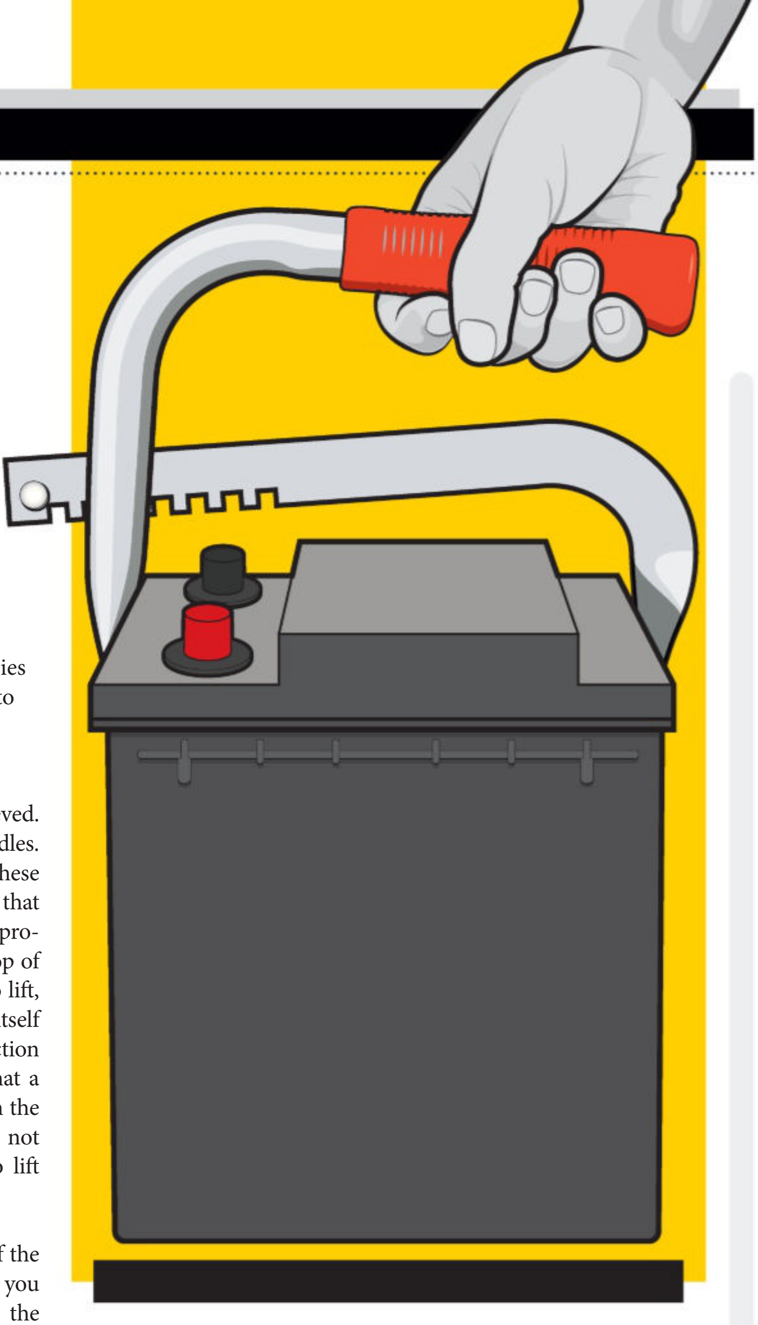
INSTALL THE CONTROL BOX Position the compact illumination-control box in a spot that can receive Bluetooth signals from an onboard mobile device. The control box should also be close to an onboard power source. There is no supplied mounting system for the control box, but we recommend using a strip of heavy-duty Velcro with peel-and-stick adhesive (not supplied) to secure the lightweight module. Add a 3-amp fuse or breaker to the red positive wire from the power cable, and connect it to a switchable 12-volt DC power source. Connect the black negative wire from the power cable to the onboard ground circuit.

ROUTE AND CONNECT THE POWER CABLE Run the power cable from the pass-through to the illumination-control box, and connect these two elements using the special cable-to-cable watertight plug, ensuring that the small pin connectors align properly and that the two knurled turnbuckles thread tightly against each other. Switch on power to the control box using the CommLight app previously installed on your mobile device, and test the system and its various features to ensure full functionality. Then secure all of the cables along their runs with zip ties to prevent chafing or other damage.

+ TEST YOUR RADIO

After you install the CommLight, give your VHF a quick test by performing a radio check to ensure that the system is functioning properly. Use channels 68, 69, 71, 72 or 78A. Key the microphone and call "radio check" three times, followed by your boat name and location. A "loud and clear" response from a fellow boater will confirm that everything is up to snuff.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JIM HATCH; PHOTO: COURTESY ICOM AMERICA INC.



MOVING BATTERIES

Tips for handling batteries in awkward spaces.

Removing and replacing batteries from boats is an age-old challenge. Batteries are heavy, and they are often housed in small spaces. This combination can make it difficult to handle batteries for DIY boat owners. In this month's Quick Study, we aim to provide some insights for installing and removing batteries that prove safer and easier for you. These tips are not intended to be universal. Situations vary. Take what you need, and leave the rest. —*Kevin Falvey*

OEM STRAPS Many batteries come from the factory with a strap attached. These straps usually snap in on the sides of the battery. You'll see the molded-in slots if your boat battery originally came with a handle. The handles are often removed for installation in a boat in order to make more room for cables. Unfortunately, this can make battery removal from a tight space difficult. Know that you can buy such battery handles on the internet via eBay and other sites. Search your battery make and model. You also might be able to get some for free from the battery maker, the battery seller or your boat dealer. Just ask.

TIP Cover the terminals when moving batteries, especially if using a metal battery carrier. Electrical tape works, as do OEM terminal covers, if you can source them.

BATTERY CARRIERS There are a variety of devices—most often called battery carriers—available from tool stores, auto stores and home centers. These can be used if the handle is missing, or for batteries that have molded-in recesses on the sides for handholds that don't work well in confined spaces where a two-handed grip on the sides can't be achieved. Some of these are rigid handles. Others are straps. What these devices have in common is that they grab or hook under a protruding lip or ridge at the top of the battery. When you go to lift, the weight of the battery itself helps provide a good connection to the battery. Be careful that a metal carrier does not touch the battery terminals. Also, do not use any carrier designed to lift the battery by its terminals.

DROP YOUR PANTS Even if the allotted space is so tight that you can't fully lift the battery, the ability to partially lift a battery can be combined with a push or a pull, making all the difference in handling batteries aboard boats. This happens to be the situation aboard my own boat. The hatch opening is not big enough to get two arms through at the same time. Furthermore, the batteries sit below the level of the hatch opening. I could "one-arm" the group 24 batteries originally installed. When I repowered with an engine requiring larger batteries, I could no longer apply enough strength to remove the battery with one arm extended inside the hatch. There's plenty of room in the compartment; it's just that the hatch opening is tight. Anyway, by tilting the battery forward and looping my pants belt around and under the aft part of the battery, I can use one hand to pull on the other ends of the belt outside the opening while lifting in the opening with the other hand. In this way, I can move the battery to a halfway position in the hatch opening. From there, Robert's my father's brother.

RELOCATION In many cases, as boaters repower with newer engines, more battery power will be required to run the advanced electronics inherent. Sometimes the original location of the batteries in the boat simply might not be big enough—or offer large enough access—to install the appropriate battery for the engine. In these cases, it might be better to move the batteries. If this is the solution you need to employ, be sure to upgrade your battery-cable size. Longer runs means increased resistance, which means you need thicker-diameter cable to achieve the same performance.

ILLUSTRATION: KELLIE JAEGER

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TRAILER TONGUE-JACK SELECTION

The trailer tongue jack supports the boat trailer when it is not hooked up to your tow vehicle. These come in a variety of types, and some boaters might wonder which is best for them. I have used an assortment of tongue jacks and compiled the following points that I suggest buyers consider. Check out these tips. *—Rick Shackleton*

WEIGHT CAPACITY The tongue jack must be rated to handle the tongue weight of your trailer. This is typically somewhere between 10 and 15 percent of the weight of the boat and trailer. Except for very light, little boats, I recommend going up one size when choosing which weight capacity to use. This will result in longer life.

TRAVEL The amount of travel that a tongue jack provides is the range of height it can be used in. You need the tongue jack to be tall enough to support the tongue so that the boat is at an aftward angle for good drainage during storage, and so that it can reach, and be removed from, your truck's hitch ball. A jack of the right weight capacity will offer sufficient travel; it doesn't hurt to take some measurements before you place your order or bring one home from the store.

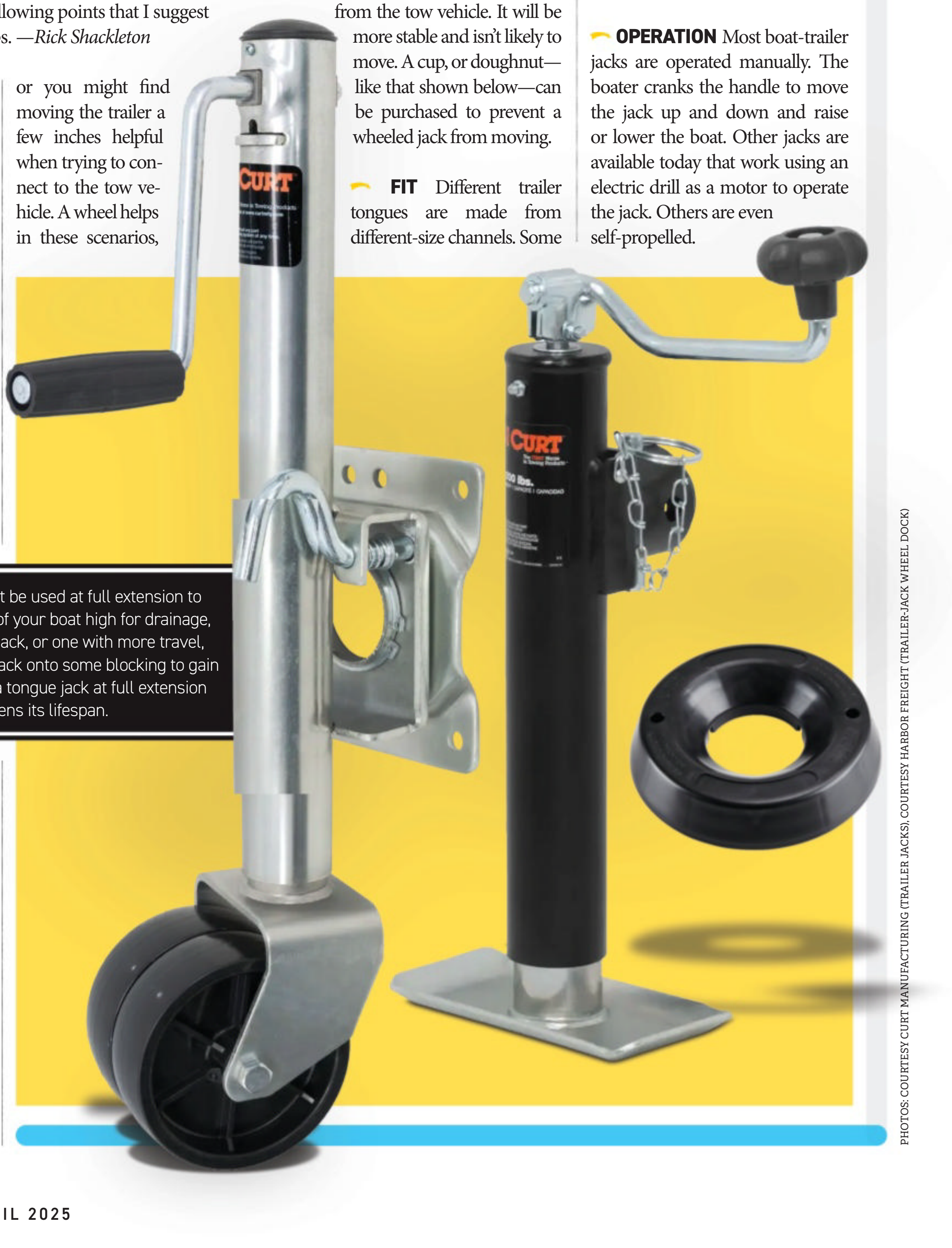
TIP

If the jack must be used at full extension to keep the bow of your boat high for drainage, select a taller jack, or one with more travel, or deploy the jack onto some blocking to gain height. Using a tongue jack at full extension severely shortens its lifespan.

WHEEL OR FOOT Tongue jacks with wheels work for boats, up to about 5,000 pounds. Select a double-wheel model for heavier boats. The wheel, or wheels, allow moving the trailer when not connected to a tow vehicle. You might need to put a trailer into a very tight place or you might find moving the trailer a few inches helpful when trying to connect to the tow vehicle. A wheel helps in these scenarios, though the rougher the ground, the less functional the wheel. A nonrolling jack with a fixed foot is used for the heaviest trailered boats (you can't move big boats without a vehicle anyway). A fixed-foot jack is also better if the trailer lives on rough or uneven ground when disconnected from the tow vehicle. It will be more stable and isn't likely to move. A cup, or doughnut—like that shown below—can be purchased to prevent a wheeled jack from moving.

FIT Different trailer tongues are made from different-size channels. Some are 3-by-3 inches, some are 3-by-4 inches, and some big trailers are 3-by-5 inches. In most cases, choosing an appropriate weight rating will be choosing a jack with the appropriate-size clamp. Still, measure your trailer's tongue dimensions before buying to be sure.

OPERATION Most boat-trailer jacks are operated manually. The boater cranks the handle to move the jack up and down and raise or lower the boat. Other jacks are available today that work using an electric drill as a motor to operate the jack. Others are even self-propelled.



PHOTOS: COURTESY CURT MANUFACTURING (TRAILER JACKS); COURTESY HARBOR FREIGHT (TRAILER-JACK WHEEL DOCK)

SOLARA

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INTRODUCING

THE S-250 DC

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CONTENDER

SINGLE VS. TWIN OUTBOARDS

We pit a single 300 outboard against twin 150s aboard a 24-foot Contender.

Contender Boats is known for tournament sport-fishing boats, but the company describes its 24S center-console as “a great day-tripping boat” that fishes well but also serves families and divers. After several sea trials on the upper and lower Chesapeake Bay, we certainly agree. On those tests, we explored a common question: Should you power your boat with single or twin outboards? Read on to see what we found.

We tested two Contender 24S boats—one with a single Yamaha F300, the other with twin Yamaha F150s. Both offered top speeds in the low 50s and efficient cruising speeds of 30 to 40 mph (3,500 to 4,500 rpm), yet the twins’ performance stood in stark contrast to the single. As expected, the weight of the twins planted the 24S’s 22.5-degree transom deadrise deep-V hull firmly in the water at all speeds and accelerated that boat to 30 mph, which was slightly faster than the single, presumably because of the greater surface area of two propellers versus one. Their lift also caused them to run slightly flatter at high speeds. Despite the weight of the two engines, this Contender’s well-designed cockpit still self-bailed effectively with twins as the scuppers remained above the waterline. Nonetheless, we think the single was the hands-down winner for several reasons.

The weight difference between the two boats is around 500 pounds. This shows up clearly in the performance charts shown on the opposite page. First, the single-engine boat is faster at every rpm stage. The single rose onto plane at a lower rpm range (2,500 to 3,000 rpm), despite the lift from the twin propellers. Second, the single was significantly more fuel-efficient, topping out at a remarkable 3.9 mpg

300
V6
4.2L
YAMAHA
150
YAMAHA
fourstroke

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY CONTENDER BOATS, COURTESY YAMAHA MOTOR CORPORATION (2)

CONTENDER 24S SPECS

· **LOA:** 24'6" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT:** 2'0" · **WEIGHT:** 5,000 lb. (dry) · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 22.5 degrees · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 130 gal. · **WATER CAPACITY:** 15 gal. · **WASTE CAPACITY:** 10 gal. (optional) · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 400 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Yamaha outboards in single or twin configurations

SINGLE 300 HP YAMAHA V-6 OUTBOARD

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.0	5.8	1.4	3.6	4.1	421.2	484.7	0	66
1500	6.8	7.9	2.2	3.1	3.6	362.8	417.5	1	73
2000	8.1	9.3	4.2	1.9	2.2	225.1	259.1	3	79
2500	12.2	14.0	5.8	2.1	2.4	245.4	282.4	4	85
3000	21.2	24.4	6.7	3.2	3.6	370.3	426.1	3	88
3500	27.1	31.2	8.0	3.4	3.9	396.5	456.3	2	90
4000	31.5	36.2	11.9	2.6	3.0	309.3	355.9	2	90
4500	35.8	41.3	15.4	2.3	2.7	272.3	313.4	2	90
5000	40.1	46.2	17.8	2.3	2.6	263.6	303.3	2	92
5500	44.7	51.4	25.4	1.8	2.0	205.7	236.8	2	94
5700	46.2	53.2	26.6	1.7	2.0	203.3	234.0	2	95

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

HOW WE TESTED: SINGLE ENGINE: Single 300 hp Yamaha V-6 outboard **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/15.5" x 17" Saltwater Series II 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.75:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 75 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

TWIN 150 HP YAMAHA I-4 OUTBOARDS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.3	5.0	1.9	2.3	2.6	267.6	307.9	0	71
1500	5.2	6.0	2.9	1.8	2.1	210.4	242.1	0	74
2000	7.0	8.0	4.9	1.4	1.6	166.0	191.0	3	82
2500	7.8	9.0	7.0	1.1	1.3	130.7	150.4	4	84
3000	14.8	17.0	9.0	1.6	1.9	192.0	221.0	4	90
3500	23.5	27.0	9.9	2.4	2.7	277.3	319.1	3	90
4000	29.1	33.5	12.6	2.3	2.7	270.3	311.1	1	92
4500	33.0	38.0	16.5	2.0	2.3	234.1	269.5	1	93
5000	37.0	42.6	23.0	1.6	1.9	188.1	216.5	1	94
5500	40.4	46.5	29.8	1.4	1.6	158.6	182.6	1	96
6000	45.2	52.0	32.7	1.4	1.6	161.7	186.1	1	98

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

HOW WE TESTED: TWIN ENGINES: Twin 150 hp Yamaha I-4 outboards **DRIVE/PROPS:** Outboard/13.75" x 19" Reliance 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 40 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

150
150
YAMAHA
YAMAHA

PHOTOS: COURTESY CONTENDER BOATS

versus 2.7 mpg for the twins at 3,500 rpm. Twin engines require twice as much rigging and maintenance as a single, and they take up more room on the transom's dive platform. Finally, the twin-150 rig costs $23,499 more than the single 300 (retail base price $157,210 versus $133,711). Note also that the twin-engine boat would not plane with a single 150, even with the crew all the way up at the bow to help balance it. (The boat will likely do so with one of the optional twin 200s.) Rather than buying twins for get-home redundancy, an annual towing-service membership might serve many boaters. To me, Contender's 24S is a great boat for a big estuary like the Chesapeake or for near-coastal work, say up to 25 miles offshore.

While the 24S shows its pure Contender fishing genes, it also offers a head in the console (5 feet, 7 inches of headroom) and seating ranging from U-shaped forward seats to transom jump seats. It's family-friendly enough to take some kids bottomfishing, serve Saturday race-committee work for a yacht club, or join friends at a sandbar. The 300 hp outboard is plenty powerful for casual tow sports. There's a lot of storage space, much of it dry, plus coolers. A couple could cruise the 24S along the coast and its rivers with a little attention to Airbnbs and waterside restaurants. It's built like a tank—solid enough to be heirloom quality for multiple generations of a water-loving family.

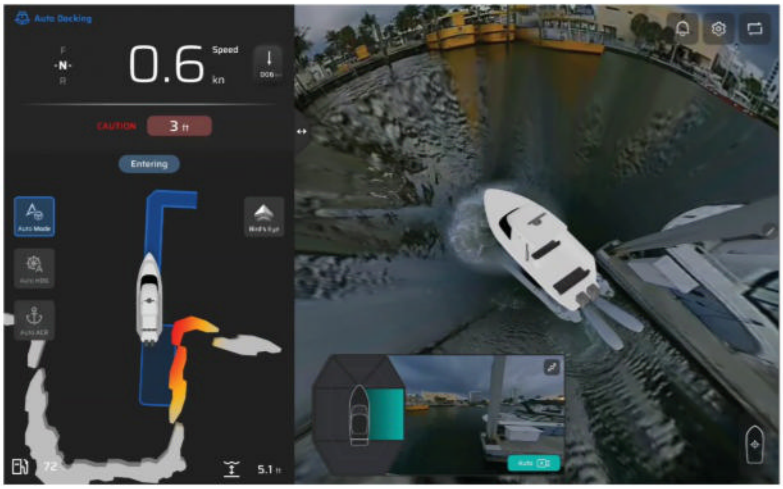
One criticism: Its fuel tank, at 130 gallons, seems large for the single-engine version; range at 3,500 rpm works out to 456 miles. While few boaters complain about too much fuel capacity, I'd guess that most people choosing the 24S wouldn't run more than 100 miles per day, so an 85- to 90-gallon capacity seems more appropriate (range about 230 miles) to avoid wasted space or carrying an extra 330 pounds of dead weight (55 gallons of fuel). For twins, or a single 350 or 400, one might want the extra 55 gallons. That's my opinion, as someone who would run 40 miles one way in it on occasion. Yours can differ, certainly.

So, as the only "Sport" model in Contender's line, the 24S seems underrated, deserving of more attention for coastal folks who aren't interested in hardcore blue water. Yes, as a semicustom builder, Contender can build sport features such as forward seating into larger models, but this boat seems to fit neatly into a widespread coastal niche where it fishes ably but also shows off its well-honed versatility. *—Capt. John Page Williams*

SEA TRIAL OF THE AVIKUS NEUBOAT SYSTEM

AI-enabled autonomous docking.

I'll admit it: I'm old-school. Technology often leaves me scratching my head, but I'm still intrigued by how it continues to reshape our world, especially when it comes to autonomous driving on the water.



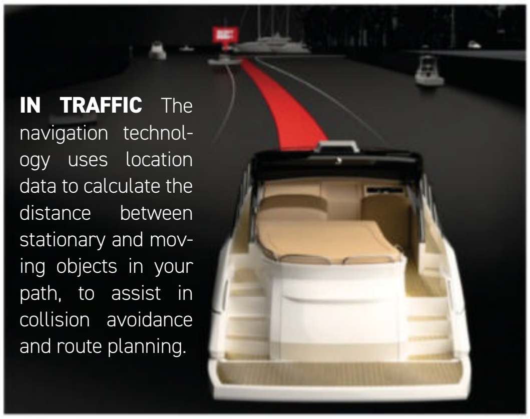
BACKING IN Avikus' docking technology utilizes six cameras to create a 360-degree view, while also using AI to recognize obstacles and distances.

I felt the same during a sea trial of the 2025 AquaSport Center Console at the 2024 Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show using the Avikus Neuboat system. Our pilot skillfully navigated through heavy traffic in the Intracoastal Waterway, as well as narrow canals filled with other boats undergoing trials. One difference: They were looking at the water; we were looking at a Raymarine screen. The radarlike image displayed nearby vessels, their proximity glowing red when close. It was impressive, yes, but unsettling. There was no sound, horn or alarm—just silent data points pulling focus away from the real-world action on deck.

Avikus, a division of HD Hyundai, renowned for its shipbuilding and advanced technologies, is leading the charge in bringing autonomy to the water with its Neuboat Navigation and Docking Solutions—what they call Advanced Driver Assistance Systems for boats. With a new US office in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Avikus aims to launch its systems in the second quarter of 2025 through partnerships with OEMs and dealers, offering special upgrade benefits as available.

The technology is split into three segments: Docking (Dock), Navigation (Navi) and Control. Docking utilizes six cameras to create a 360-degree view, and using AI to automatically recognize obstacles and distances. It guides boats into slips and docks with precision. Navi uses lidar, one camera, and location (chart) data to identify and calculate the distance both of stationary and moving objects, showing speeds to avoid collisions, as well as route planning. Meanwhile, Control manages throttle and steering, with the option for manual override via the wheel. All of this integrates into any display units that have HDMI and touchscreen connectivity, offering captains an impressive suite of automated tools.

It's a natural evolution when you consider how auto-assist technologies have transformed cars. From cruise control and auto-braking in the 1970s to today's blind-spot detection, track control and auto-emergency braking, the trend toward automation is undeniable. In the marine world, several manufacturers are now embracing auto-docking, and it's easy to see the appeal; according to the US Coast Guard, the top two contributors to boating accidents are operator inattention and improper lookout, followed by operator inexperience, excessive speed, and machinery failure. Having an automated system adds an extra layer of protection that should eliminate a lot of operator error.



IN TRAFFIC The navigation technology uses location data to calculate the distance between stationary and moving objects in your path, to assist in collision avoidance and route planning.

Yet I remain respectfully vigilant. Because while autonomous systems aim to reduce human error, they also create a new type of distraction. Should we be focusing on a screen or scanning the horizon?

And it's pricey. At upwards of $20,000 per package for Dock and Navi (Control is dependent on one or both of the other packages), this technology is hardly accessible for most boaters. It's a hefty gamble for early adopters, and while these tools will undoubtedly improve over time, there is no substitute for solid boating education and hands-on training.

Boating is unique: There are no brakes, conditions shift constantly, and the stakes are high. While autonomous technologies will likely soon enhance the experience, for now, let's keep our eyes on the water, watch for navigation markers, and stay mindful of our surroundings and other boats. In the end, the responsibility to boat safely still rests squarely on the captain. *—Marilyn DeMartini*

PHOTOS: COURTESY AVIKUS

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IL DULCE SUONO

Hertz Marine Audio looks to make waves with its Italian-built stereo systems.

In the not so distant past, boat owners had a much different audio experience on the water than while driving in the tow vehicle they used to launch it. In the auto, they had high expectations of crystal-clear sound, while on the water, most didn't expect to even hear their music while the engine was running—and certainly not while underway.

Now, thanks to technological advancements, marine stereos have bridged the gap to bring quality sound on board. Enter Hertz Marine Audio, a relative newcomer to the boating industry that's putting out some of the highest-quality marine stereo components available. Here's how the company is trying to up the game.

FROM CARS TO BOATS

Hertz is owned by Elletro, an Italian audio company that's been around since the 1970s and started making high-quality Hertz stereo systems for cars in 1998. After developing a reputation in the automotive market, Hertz started making marine stereos in 2016 and have been making inroads into the US market in recent years, both as an aftermarket upgrade and appearing as OEM offerings in boat lines such as Tige, Yamaha, and Sea Pro. The goal has been to bring the same high-quality sound that most people associate with their cars to the water.

CAPRI SOURCE UNIT

The Capri Source unit is designed to broadcast high-resolution audio throughout the speaker system on the boat. Its multizone functionality allows you to set up to four independent audio zones on your boat, where listeners can set the volume levels to their liking. So the speakers in the bow, stern, tower and cabin can all be set to different levels by different listeners. The Capri's remote units also have the exact same controls as the primary source unit, so the user can go through the same intuitive commands, whether at the helm or the swim platform or lounging belowdecks. Hertz also offers a "black box solution," where the software can be integrated into your boat's primary MFD at the helm, eliminating the need for the primary source unit if helm real estate is at a premium for mounting on the dash.

HTX TOWER SPEAKERS

The HTX line of tower speakers is built with a sturdy UV-resistant cannister that has an IP65 rating (protecting against water and dust) to withstand the harsh marine environment. What really sets these speakers apart is Hertz's common motor technology, which allows Hertz to use a smaller cannister to produce high-quality sound at a high volume. It also produces excellent clarity.

PHOTOS: COURTESY HERTZ AUDIO

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"We solved the oldest challenge in boating stereos," says Brian Power, VP of the Hertz Marine Division. "You used to have to choose between high-output and high-sound quality. Now you can have both."

Power noted that the HTX speakers produce loud and clear audio—both for the people in the boat, as well as those "off axis," either on the sandbar or enjoying watersports behind the boat.

HMS SUBWOOFER The HMS subwoofer is designed to overcome one of the biggest challenges of open-space audio: getting a clear and consistent bass sound in an open setting. The HMS subwoofers can handle 500W of continuous power and don't need to be housed in a dedicated enclosure to produce a high-quality bass sound throughout the boat.

HMX COCKPIT SPEAKERS The HMX coaxial cockpit speakers offer similar high-quality casing and large 1.4-inch-diameter tweeter. The tweeter provides sound dispersion throughout the boat, covering a broader area and providing a nice tonal quality throughout the boat, while still handling low-end frequency.

VENEZIA V6 AMPLIFIER The Venezia V6 is a six-channel marine amplifier that boosts the quality and fidelity of the speaker output, a necessity in an open-air boat setting. The die-cast aluminum casing withstands marine conditions and electromagnetic interference from the other onboard electronic components. Its plug-and-play input and output connectors make it easy to sync with the other stereo components.

What do you get when you put all the Hertz components together? According to Power, "You get a concert-capable product producing sound like you're in an amphitheater."
—*Pete McDonald*

PHOTOS: COURTESY HERTZ AUDIO

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BOATINGLAB

By Randy Vance

THE DEFENDER features LED lighting, sound equalizer and unbeatable room- and camp-filling tones.

PORTABLE BLUETOOTH SPEAKERS

While many boaters live and die by their onboard stereo system, others enjoy the portable versatility of freestanding Bluetooth speakers. We've even seen some new-boat models offered with portable wireless speakers as the default audio system. They can go from boat to sandbar and sandbar to campsite, and provide a backyard-barbecue soundtrack as well, bringing outstanding value—and terrific sound, as we discovered. We tested three of the most popular Bluetooth speakers for the boating and outdoor crowd, and here are some of our observations.

ECOXGEAR DEFENDER

ECOXGEAR.COM; $259.99

We've tested many EcoXgear products and found them astonishingly powerful in clarity, bass, and ease of use. They can be paired with up to 100 other EcoXgear or Sound Extreme devices, meaning everyone on the sandbar or regatta can simultaneously enjoy the same tunes. Left- and right-handed grab handles are integrated into the design for easy snatch-and-go portability, and tie-down connections can be used to secure it to the deck. An integrated LED light illuminates the camp and can serve as a roadside trouble light. The speaker's internal multicolored LED lights can be tuned to flash and change color to the beat of the music. A dedicated AC/DC adapter connects via a jack beneath a watertight twist-off port that also houses a USB charge output and a 3.5 mm input jack.

TEST TEAM OBSERVATIONS: This was inarguably the best combination of clear treble and deep bass for overall room-filling sound. The optimal equalizer setting was the indoor favorite among our test team, and the outdoor setting indeed proved to carry the tunes with superior clarity and depth of tone.

THE VERDICT: The team liked the music played through this device best for its overall power and clarity. The ability to have two devices connected allowed for dual DJs, and the overall feature set at a much lower price brings great value.

OUTPUT POWER: 121 dB and 100W dynamic Texas Instruments power amplifier

EQUALIZER: Three settings for indoors, outdoors, and optimal settings for full sound.

WATERPROOF AND DUSTPROOF: IP67 can withstand full submersion up to 1 meter for 30 minutes, and it floats.

SPEAKER DIMENSIONS: 6-by-9-inch full-range polypropylene carbon main driver, 1.7-inch titanium tweeter

LED LIGHTING: Changes colors with the beat of the music, plus LED flashlight

BLUETOOTH CONNECTIVITY: Bluetooth 5.1, stream up to 100 feet away

DEVICE LINKS: Connect two phones at once. Use EcoCast to link up to 100 EcoXgear and SoundExtreme products together from up to 30 feet.

3.5 MM AUX INPUT: Yes

INTEGRATED MICROPHONE: Voice calls, speakerphone capabilities, Siri/Google voice-assistant support

EXTERNAL MICROPHONE INPUT (NOT INCLUDED): PA-system function with three equalization effects to optimize your voice

CHARGE PORTS: 5V 2.1A USB-C

BACKLIT BUTTONS, DUAL HANDLES AND STRAP POINTS: Easy portability

BATTERY LIFE: 25-plus-hour play time (6-plus hours at max volume)

BATTERY CAPACITY: Built-in rechargeable battery 79.96 Wh at 14.8V, 5,400 mAh

AC POWER SUPPLY: Dedicated AC adapter with input jack

COLORS: White, black, emerald, orange

PHOTOS: COURTESY ECOXGEAR

KICKER

BF100

KICKER.COM; $129.99

The BF100 produces 360-degree sound thanks to two speakers facing in each direction. Linking two BF100s via the Kicker Connect app gives a room-filling tone with outstanding clarity but with a gentler intensity, and the pair still comes in at a combined value price. The floating, waterproof device is sized to fit in a boat's cup holder and can be tethered to a float tube or kayak via the integrated carry handle on top. All controls are via soft-touch watertight buttons, and charge ports such as input jacks and other devices are protected behind a tough, watertight silicone door.

TEST TEAM OBSERVATIONS: Connecting two speakers via the app can be glitchy, but once a pair is connected, they reconnect easily the next time you power up the devices.
THE VERDICT: Rock 'n' roll and heavy metal came through well whether with one device or two, but it wasn't designed to bring a thump to the chest. Easy listening, jazz, and vocals were the crispest and clearest on this device. Its portability adds convenience to take anywhere.
OUTPUT POWER: 16W
EQUALIZER: Equalizer tones adjustable via the Connect App for optimized sound
WATERPROOF: IP67, and it floats.
SPEAKER DIMENSIONS: Two $1\frac{2}{3}$-inch drivers; two $1\frac{3}{8}$- by-3-inch passive radiators
LINKING SPEAKERS: Two speakers can be linked manually or through the Connect app.
3.5 MM INPUT JACK: Yes
INTEGRATED MICROPHONE: Voice calls, speakerphone capabilities
CHARGE OUTPUT PORT: Yes
BATTERY LIFE: 12 hours
BATTERY CAPACITY: Li-ion 3.7V, 2,600 mAh
RECHARGE DEVICE: Mini USB
COLORS: White with gray trim

TURTLEBOX

ORIGINAL GEN 2

TURTLEBOXAUDIO.COM; $399

Turtlebox is rugged, crush- and crack-resistant, waterproof, and it floats. This powerful 120 dB speaker's 1-inch tweeter and 6.9-inch woofer are tuned specifically for outdoor use, setting up a thumping bass tone that you can feel in your chest. Its Spartan design has a sturdy carrying handle, stainless-steel connectors for strapping it to a T-top or deck surface, and backlit buttons that are easy to see in the dark and daylight. Its DC-jack charge port is behind a watertight door that also offers USB-C device-charging output and a 3.5 mm input jack.

TEST TEAM OBSERVATIONS: The Turtlebox was tops for outdoor base tones, on par with the EcoXgear Defender. Volume was ample for entertaining at the sandbar or around a campfire. Indoors, the treble clarity was lacking and fell behind the Defender and Bullfrog speakers.
THE VERDICT: The Turtlebox gets the nod for longest, three-day battery life—an important feature for remote use. Its rugged, almost-military styling was favored by the team, but it just didn't deliver the sound clarity of its competitors.
OUTPUT POWER: 120 dB, 85W
EQUALIZER: None
WATERPROOF AND DUSTPROOF: IP67 can withstand full submersion up to 1 meter for 30 minutes, and it floats.
SPEAKER DIMENSIONS: 6-by-9-inch full-range polypropylene carbon main driver, 1-inch titanium tweeter
LED: Multicolor
BLUETOOTH: Bluetooth 5.0, stream up to 100 feet away
DEVICE LINKS: Connect two speakers for bigger sound across the sandbar.
3.5 MM AUX INPUT: Yes
INTEGRATED MICROPHONE: Speakerphone capabilities
EXTERNAL MICROPHONE INPUT (NOT INCLUDED): It has a PA-system function with three equalization effects to optimize your voice.
CHARGE PORTS: 5V 2.1A USB-C
BACKLIT BUTTONS, DUAL HANDLES AND STRAP POINTS: Easy portability
BATTERY LIFE: 72 hours
BATTERY CAPACITY: 85 Wh
AC POWER SUPPLY: Dedicated AC adapter with input jack beneath waterproof port
COLORS: Orange, white, tan, green, gray

PHOTOS: (FROM LEFT) COURTESY KICKER, COURTESY TURTLEBOX

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

#3433

REGAL
43 SAV

This new sport-activity vessel from Regal covers all the bases when it comes to fun, relaxation and luxury afloat.

PHOTO: TOM KING

With its ability to cruise, fish, dive, entertain and even overnight, it's tempting to dub Regal's 43 SAV the proverbial "jack of all trades," but that would imply it's also a master of none. On the contrary, I found this Sport-Activity Vessel one of the most well-thought-out, well-executed boats I've tested to date. From the intuitive flow of its layout to an abundance of features and design, Regal seems to have thought of nearly everything—and for everyone who comes aboard.

Peruse the 43 from stern to bow, and the boat reveals itself in five distinct zones, each of which suits a specific task or desire. Start at the stern, and the

YAMAHA
XTO OFFSHORE
REGAL

SCAN ME

To see our online photo gallery of the Regal 43 SAV, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3433.

PHOTOS: COURTESY REGAL BOATS

immediate impression is of the ultimate sandbar boat. Large terrace doors to both port and starboard lower to add nearly 50 square feet to the aft cockpit, creating an airy platform at the water's edge. Twin settees face each other forward and aft. Pull a cold one from ice boxes on either side of the former; one smartly doubles as an ice maker. A 43-inch flat-screen TV pivots out from underneath the hardtop. Watch the kids run and jump off the open wings, or take a stroll along an unencumbered swim platform to access the boarding ladder. It opens outboard, away from the boat's trio of outboards. In a rarely seen yet practical nod, there's even an adjacent storage locker for a stern anchor, keeping a Danforth readily at hand when setting up off the beach.

When it's time for fishing, terrace doors pivot inward to complete its deep and secure aft cockpit. Each features a large dive door to access the dock or to pull in that big tuna. Two pressurized 30-gallon livewells await at the transom station. Twin 60-gallon fish boxes are beneath the floor to port and starboard. Rod holders are found across the transom

as well as in gunwales, rocket launchers at each corner of the hardtop, and a polished wood rigging table that can be optioned adjacent to the forward settee. Outriggers can also be added for those seeking to troll.

Step deeper under the protection of the hardtop to—*voilà!*—a summer kitchen. Prep fillets on the cutting board over its deep sink, toss onto the pair of electric grills immediately adjacent, and the freshest-ever catch of the day is on its way to being plated. Twin pullout drawer refrigerators offer an abundance of cold storage below. In between, a trio of drawers stash the necessary extras. Overhead, a 16-inch Garmin display is flanked by a pair of wireless phone-charging cradles and speakers. Plush helm seats forward complete the picture, pivoting 180 degrees to provide comfortable seating while watching some mahi sizzle, catching up with the latest college game day, or keeping an eye on the trolling spread.

Ultimate Trim Series offers nearly 1,000,000 personalizations, from interior designs to towers to audio.

Turning to the helm, a pair of 22-inch Garmin touchscreen displays dominate the dash, each sporting a custom Regal interface with common task bar. A great example of how these screens could be configured was showcased during our test at day's end—the eclectic onscreen mix including everything from navigation chart, engine data, and vessel controls to hullside camera and live college football game, courtesy of the optional KVH satellite dome on the roof. That same data can also be seen on the large aft screen, overhead monitor in the summer kitchen, and on Regal's unique GarmRests—Garmin screens built into helm armrests that keep controls and monitoring a fingertip away.

Access the cabin via an electric door to the left of the helm. Highlights below include more than 6 feet of headroom and an abundance of natural light, courtesy of a large portside glass window forward and twin rectangular windows midcabin. Forward couches convert to a queen-size berth. Aft, two twin innerspring mattresses morph into a king with the use of a headboard filler cushion in the full-beam stateroom. The elegant head compartment adds a full-size toilet, glass sink bowl, and clear shower partition. Back topside, access the bow via a portside walk-through. Lounges wrap the perimeter, offering space for up to eight passengers. Pop in the pedestal table for food and drinks. Lower it, add a filler cushion, and turn the entire space into a sun pad.

Regal's deep-V OceanTrac 2 hull delivered a smooth, confident ride in the 2- to 3-foot seas we encountered on our test day. Credit not only design, but also construction. Hull and stringers are vacuum-infused together. Carbon fiber is added to key areas for additional strength. As to performance, our test boat neared 53 mph with its trio of 450 hp Yamaha XTO V-8s. Optional power configurations extend as high as 1,800 hp.

An interesting competitor is found in Scout's 42-foot-4-inch 42 LXF ($1,341,804 with quad Mercury 350 Verados). A more traditional center-console, it offers similar multiuse versatility, with its own summer kitchen, single-berth cabin with well-appointed head and shower, and impressive array of tech. If you're looking to rock the sandbar, however, its singular portside "beach platform" is more like a small dock. Lower the Regal's massive twin terrace doors, and you've got your own floating island. *—Jeff Hemmel*

High Points

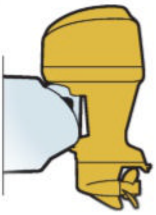
- ▶ Standard Seakeeper 4 produces stability at rest, even in rough seas.
- ▶ Optional Regal LivePower automatically switches power sources and keeps charge.
- ▶ Regal offers terrace doors port and starboard. These fold out to increase cockpit size and grant great vibe and water access.

Low Points

- ▶ Anchor locker offers access to windlass and freshwater sprayer close at hand, but access to anchor rode can be challenging.
- ▶ Deep transom lazarette might prove difficult to access if you're not agile.

· **LOA:** 44'1" · **BEAM:** 13'2" · **DRAFT (MAX):** 2'9" · **DISPLACEMENT:** 28,000 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 18 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 10'7" · **MAX CABIN HEADROOM:** 6'6" · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 498 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 1,800 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Twin or triple Mercury outboards to 1,800 hp; triple Yamaha outboards to 1,350 hp

Price: $1,541,240
(well-equipped; with test power)



AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Triple Yamaha 450 XTO Offshore V-8 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Yamaha XTO OS $16\frac{5}{8}$" x 19" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.79:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 283 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 1,170 lb.

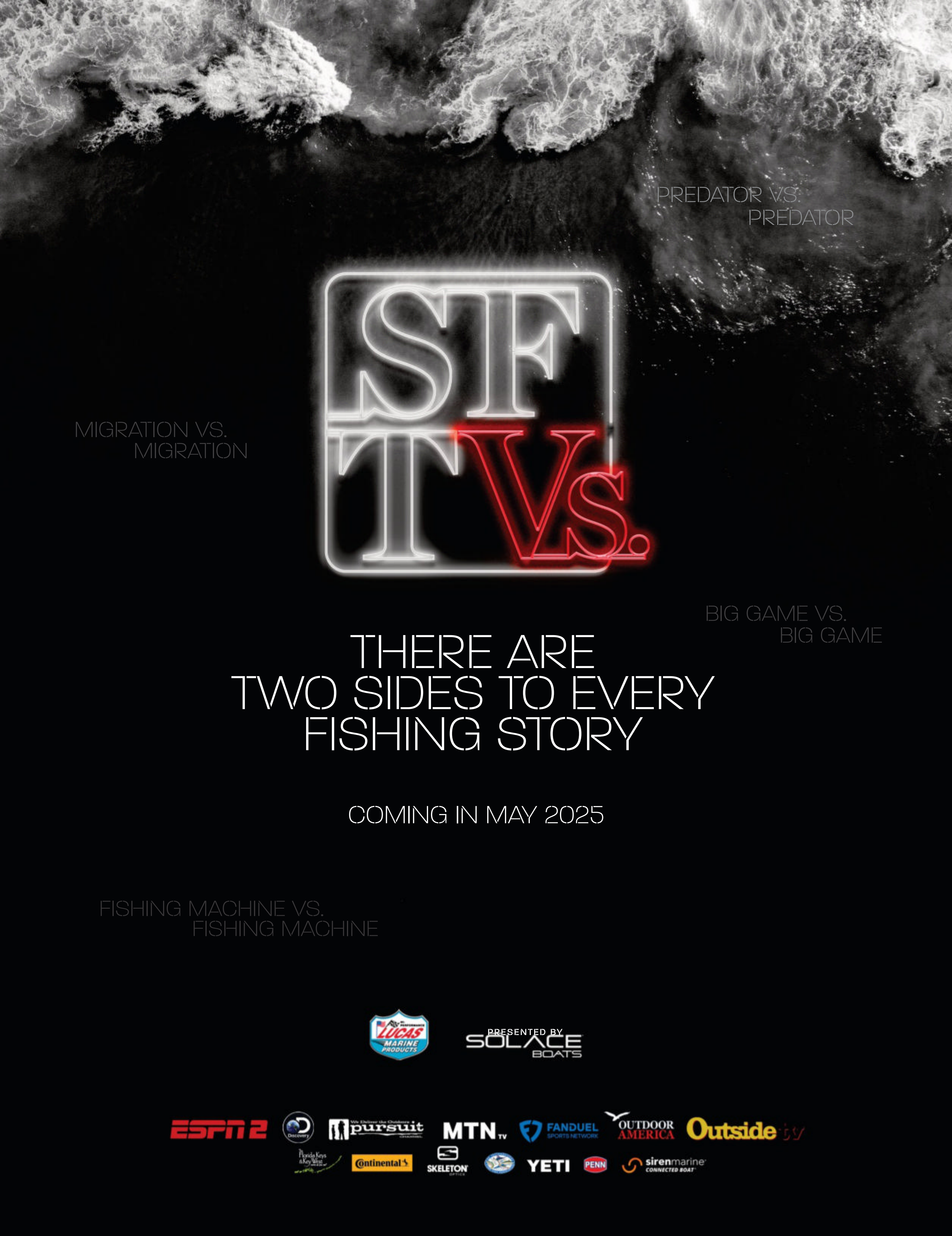
REGAL BOATS
Orlando, Florida; regalboats.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	3.8	4.4	5.3	0.7	0.8	323.3	372.1	1	61
1500	5.8	6.7	8.3	0.7	0.8	314.4	361.8	1	65
2000	7.3	8.4	13.6	0.5	0.6	240.6	276.8	3	68
2500	8.3	9.5	20.7	0.4	0.5	178.7	205.7	4	73
3000	10.9	12.5	28.8	0.4	0.4	169.0	194.5	5	79
3500	18.7	21.5	36.5	0.5	0.6	229.4	264.0	5	82
4000	28.6	32.9	47.9	0.6	0.7	267.5	307.8	5	82
4500	33.8	38.9	62.8	0.5	0.6	241.3	277.6	5	83
5000	31.6	38.2	75.5	0.5	0.6	225.9	260.0	4	87
5500	42.3	48.7	95.0	0.4	0.5	199.7	229.8	4	88
6000	45.4	52.3	113.7	0.4	0.5	179.2	206.2	4	89

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: TOM KING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SFT VS.
MIGRATION VS.
MIGRATION
BIG GAME VS.
BIG GAME
THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY FISHING STORY
COMING IN MAY 2025
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PRESENTED BY SOLACE BOATS
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Discovery
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OUTDOOR AMERICA
Outside tv
The Florida Keys & Key West
Continental
SKELETON OPTICS
YETI
PENN
sirenmarine CONNECTED BOAT

MERCURY
S30

SCAN ME

To watch our video review of the Navan S30, go to boatingmag.com/3434.

PHOTO: COURTESY NAVAN

Navan (rhymes with "baton") is new boat line from Brunswick Corporation, which also builds Sea Rays, Bayliners, Boston Whalers, Heyday Boats, Princecrafts and others, along with Mercury Marine outboards and sterndrives. Bucking the trend of similar boats imported from the Nordic countries, the S30 was designed at the state-of-the-art Brunswick Boat Group Technology Center, located at Boston Whaler's compound in Edgewater, Florida, and is built in Merritt Island, Florida, where the largest Sea Rays are built. (Navan boats sold in Europe are built in Poland.) Navan makes two models: the C30, which has an enclosed pilothouse and has proved to be more popular in northern climes for those seeking to stretch short boating seasons. The

#3434

BOATING CERTIFIED TEST

NAVAN
S30

An all-American adventure boat with European flavor.

PHOTOS: COURTESY NAVAN

model we tested was the S30, which features an open design that will be more popular as a dayboat for those buyers seeking less weather protection and more open space topside.

Navan designers created the ability to board the boat from either side thanks to extra-long swim platformettes, which wrapped around the optional twin Mercury 300 hp Verado V-8 outboards that powered our test boat. For better grip and comfort, the entire deck surface on our boat was clad in optional GatorStep. Adding an optional ski-tow arch gives those boarding an extra handhold for added safety, and it ups its fun quotient. On many boats of this type, fun-in-the-sun space is limited, but on the S30, those sitting on the quad-wide rear bench seat can enjoy the great outdoors. A generous amount of deck space between the rear bench and the one in front of it is ideal for cocktail party mingling.

Brunswick boats are known for their clever seating arrangements, and this boat is no outlier. The amidships bench can face toward the bow to create a total of eight to 10 forward-facing seats, which is the

preferred arrangement for cruising. Both bench seats have tall armrests for comfort and security. But something magical happens when the amidships bench is tumbled aft to face the transom bench and create a social zone. This is enhanced by adding an optional bifold teak table in between. In addition, it reveals an entertainment area complete with a sink, a drink bin and plenty of counter space, along with an electric grill for creating hot appetizers. Below on our test boat was an optional pair of Isotherm drawer-style refrigerators.

At the helm is a pair of captain's chairs with armrests for comfort. A bit unusual is the placement of the helm on the port side of the boat instead of the more-normal starboard-side helm found on most American boats. Despite being confined under a hardtop, it doesn't feel claustrophobic thanks to the four smoked acrylic sun panels above. The windshield is sportboat-low, but it offers a surprising amount of coverage because the helm seats are low enough for average-height people to peer through it when sitting. A thoughtful option would be adjustable-height pedestals to accommodate drivers of varying heights. There's plenty of room to stand and to look above the windshield for an uncluttered view.

> Unlike most hull designs, the T-Step Hull this Navan rides on is patented, and was developed to enhance performance, handling, and fuel efficiency.

Below is a well-appointed cabin with most of the space given over to the berth, which comfortably sleeps two adults. Thanks to the side windows and shaded acrylic hatch, it has plenty of ambient light. The large box on the starboard side contains the 12-volt Mabru climate-control system and makes a handy place to store luggage when weekending. Although there's not enough room for an enclosed shower, there's a handheld showerhead for bathing and an electric-flush toilet.

For those looking to work on their tans, there's a large sun lounge on the foredeck with backrests for added comfort and cup holders for parking beverages. Our test boat had the optional windlass—a no-brainer on a luxurious boat like this.

The S30's T-Hull is Brunswick's first-ever with a vented stepped design. This design introduces air underneath the hull to reduce friction for better fuel economy and unreal turning ability. We tested the Navan on the Indian River in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, not far from the Boston Whaler campus where it was designed. The channel is relatively narrow here, but there was plenty of room to whip it into a G-force-generating 360-degree turn. Its hull features 20 degrees of deadrise at the transom and a fairly narrow-for-its-length beam of 9 feet, 10 inches to help it slice through the waves. And despite being 33-plus feet long with a weight of more than 4 tons, its performance was impressive. Reaching plane in 4 seconds, it accelerated to 30 mph in 7.1 seconds and achieved a top speed of 57.1 mph.

Our test boat was especially easy to drive thanks to Mercury's Trim Assist, which automatically keeps the boat at the proper running attitude. It was also equipped with the ZipWake system, which uses blade-like interceptors instead of plate-like tabs. These automatically keep the boat running level.

Comparison shoppers should trial the Nimbus T-9, starting at $191,496 with a single 250 Mercury V-8 and a bow thruster. Pricing for the Navan S30 with a 400 hp Mercury V-10 Verado starts at $216,496.

When owners choose the twin Mercury 300 hp outboard option that we tested, the Navan S30 comes standard with Joystick Piloting for Outboards, which helps ease docking and offers other features such as Skyhook, a virtual anchor. Owners can select a bow thruster for docking assistance if they order the boat with twin Mercury V-6 225 outboards or with a single Mercury 400 hp V-10 Verado outboard. —*Alan Jones*

High Points

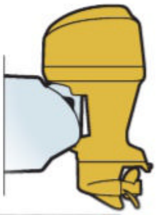
- ▶ Visibility at the helm is excellent in all directions.
- ▶ We found this boat to be efficient, achieving an impressive 1.8 mph at 30 mph when running at 3,500 rpm.
- ▶ The rocket-launcher rod-holder option is a plus for those who fish.

Low Points

- ▶ Even with the bow pulpit, the straight bow means you need to be careful when raising or lowering the anchor. Consider adding a scuff plate.
- ▶ There's no hardtop-rack option for securing items such as paddleboards and kayaks.
- ▶ There's no grab rail along the hardtop to help ease walking to and from the bow.

· **LOA:** 33'7" · **BEAM:** 9'10" · **DRAFT:** 3'1" (motor down) · **DISPLACEMENT:** 8,010 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 20 degrees · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 105 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 600 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single Mercury 300 hp V-8 or 400 V-10, twin V-6 225 Verados, or twin 250 or 300 V-8s

Price: $351,350
(as tested)



AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD

HOW WE TESTED

ENGINES: Twin Mercury 300 hp Verado V-8 outboards **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Mercury Rev 4 14.6" x 21" 4-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.85:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 85 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 380 lb.

NAVAN, A DIVISION OF BRUNSWICK
Mettawa, Illinois; navan-boats.com/us

C

BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	5.5	6.3	3.0	1.8	2.1	174.1	200.3	1	61
1500	7.6	8.8	4.6	1.7	1.9	158.6	182.5	1	64
2000	9.3	10.8	7.6	1.2	1.4	117.3	134.9	3	70
2500	14.0	16.2	9.6	1.5	1.7	139.5	160.5	4	74
3000	18.6	21.5	12.0	1.6	1.8	148.2	170.5	3	75
3500	25.9	29.9	16.7	1.6	1.8	148.2	170.5	3	77
4000	31.2	35.9	21.9	1.4	1.6	135.7	156.2	2	82
4500	36.5	42.0	28.8	1.3	1.5	120.9	139.1	2	83
5000	42.3	48.7	35.8	1.2	1.4	112.8	129.8	2	86
5500	47.5	54.7	42.8	1.1	1.3	105.9	121.8	2	89
6000	49.6	57.1	48.0	1.0	1.2	98.5	113.4	2	90

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY NAVAN

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SCAN ME

To see a photo gallery of the Sea Pro 225FLX Sandbar, scan this tag or visit boatingmag.com/3435.

Given the widespread popularity of taking one's boat to The Sandbar, or The Cove, or The Island (I'm using proper nouns because in every boating locality, these places are referred to as specific locations), it's a wonder we haven't tested a boat with this name in the 69 years we've been in publication. Way to go, Sea Pro! And not just for the name. The 225FLX Sandbar Boat is designed and outfitted with features to make it shine for boat buyers who regularly visit their local gathering spot—the beach brigade, the cove captains, the sandbar bosses.

As our test proved, this is a versatile boat. Read on to discover more about it.

The 225FLX rides on a conventional V-hull with a moderate 17.5 degrees of deadrise. This

PHOTO: COURTESY SEA PRO BOATS

BOATING
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#3435

SEA PRO 225FLX SANDBAR BOAT

Rule the sandbar aboard the Sea Pro 225FLX Sandbar. Top speed? 42 mph.

SEA PRO
SUZUKI

PHOTOS: COURTESY SEA PRO BOATS

is not a boat that is going to offer a high cruising speed on choppy water, like other boats that sport a deeper V.

That said, the 225FLX can readily traverse open water safely and comfortably when properly handled. In fact, our test took place on a day of questionable weather, with 20-knot winds whipping up steep, 3-foot whitecaps. In these conditions, the Sea Pro's ability to stay on plane at 15 mph—something that a similar boat with a deeper V would be challenged to achieve, by the way—allowed proceeding in dry, slam-free comfort. The optional Zip Wake auto trim tabs helped in this. It's all about setting your expectations.

Shallower deadrise also results in higher efficiency due to easier planing. This allows the boat to achieve good performance with a 200 hp Suzuki inline-4 outboard. Our tester hit 30 mph in 10.3 seconds and topped out over 40 mph. The chart shows the fuel burn, which I deem to be excellent for a coastal boat this size. Larger 250 hp options are available (see page 82 for a comparison of inline-4 and V-6 Suzuki outboards).

Also, the scant 14 inches that the 225FLX draws can be attributed to its hull form. That's knee-deep easy wading, even for kids. And wading around the boat is what Sea Pro envisioned when it developed the innovative Sandbar Table that mounts to the transom, just above the waterline. This facilitates serving snacks while beached or anchored shallow.

Other sandbar-specific features include a tremendous head compartment—the largest we've seen in a boat this size. There's a sink and a porthole, and our tester sported the optional marine head with a pump-out. For long days beached or at anchor, your crew will need relief, and this head provides it comfortably.

Let's review the seating. Forward, the V-shaped seats combine with the seat on the console front to allow a group to gather around an optional table. Optional backrests convert the seats to lounges. Pull the cushions (these fit inside the head; we checked) and use the optional table as a filler to create a casting platform. The seats conceal draining storage.

> The standard Sea Pro app keeps you in touch with bilge-pump activity and battery status, and is your direct line to service help should you need it.

Aft, folding jump seats create a three- to four-person-wide lounge out of the aft platform. Big storage is inside. Want to face aft? The leaning post backrest flip-flops to do just that. Also, an optional cooler slides out from beneath the leaning post to form either a footrest or another seat, or for easy access to the cooler itself.

Flip that leaning post's backrest the other way, and take your spot at the helm. There is comfort seated or standing thanks to the footrest, and there was enough room at the helm, further enhanced by the tilt helm power steering. There's also space for a variety of electronics, include big-screen MFDs, to add to the standard Simrad 9-incher. An Audison Marine Audio stereo is also standard, along with a compass and the Sea Pro Connect app. I appreciated the dry box atop the console: Every boat needs a "Captain's box" at the helm for wallets, licenses, glasses and more. Overhead, the T-top provided good sun coverage and impressed me in several ways. Made in-house by Sea Pro, the top features powder-coated pipework, an underside that matches the hull color, and a grab handle incorporated into its perimeter that I found perfectly placed for boarding the boat from a high dock.

Fishing standards include trolling-motor wiring, raw-water washdown, undergunwale rod racks, four gunwale rod holders, a 68-quart stern cooler box, two 120-quart boxes under the bow seats, and a 12-gallon livewell.

The price is definitely a feature. Offered for $81,932 as a nicely equipped version with hull color, trim tabs and a 200 Suzuki, the MSRP for a loaded version like we tested runs $103,361. This boat is a deal in today's boat market, dear reader. For comparison, I suggest that you look at the Sportsman Open 212 ($89,495 with a F200XSA2 Yamaha in white). It's a new 2025 model, and though its console head compartment is not as large as that of the Sea Pro, it comes with a tall tempered-glass windshield, which I prefer to the short standard windshield aboard the Sea Pro.

Compare build quality when shopping, not just price and features. Sea Pro's hullsides and deck boxes feature vinylester resin to thwart osmotic blistering, and is foamed to deaden sound, provide insulation, and enhance safety. The stringer system is a single-piece gelcoated structure bonded in with methacryate adhesive. It is stiff, strong and rot-proof.

In characterizing the Sea Pro 225FLX Sandbar, it might be easy to say that it's a good boat for the money. I'll just say that I think it's a good boat, period. Check it out for yourself, and let me know what you think. —*Kevin Falvey*

High Points

- ▶ The built-in house T-top proved sturdy in rough water and offers an integrated handrail to ease boarding from the dock.
- ▶ You'll appreciate the dry box atop the helm for a variety of reasons.
- ▶ This boat boasts the biggest head in its class.
- ▶ Through-bolted hatch lids are finished on both sides.

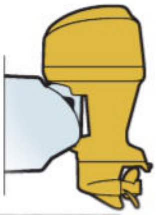
Low Point

- ▶ The standard windshield is too low to provide any real protection. Order the optional and removable hard enclosure.

· **LOA:** 21'9" · **BEAM:** 8'6" · **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'2" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 3,559 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 17.5 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 8'0" · **MAX CABIN HEADROOM:** 4'10" · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 85 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 250 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single or twin Mercury, Suzuki, or Yamaha outboards to 250 hp

Price: $79,891
(starting price)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

ENGINE: 200 hp Suzuki DF200 **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/16" x 20" 3-blade stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 2.50:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 75 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 360 lb.

SEA PRO BOATS
Whitmire, South Carolina; seapromfg.com

C

BOATING
CERTIFIED
TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	3.6	4.1	0.7	5.1	5.9	389.4	448.1	0	68
1500	5.9	6.8	1.2	4.9	5.7	376.7	433.5	1	71
2000	7.1	8.2	1.9	3.7	4.3	285.1	328.1	2	73
2500	7.8	9.0	3.1	2.5	2.9	191.9	220.9	2	77
3000	13.0	15.0	3.9	3.3	3.8	255.7	294.2	3	81
3500	18.3	21.1	5.2	3.5	4.0	269.1	309.7	2	84
4000	22.5	26.0	7.1	3.2	3.7	243.0	279.6	2	86
4500	25.9	29.9	8.1	3.2	3.7	245.0	281.9	2	88
5000	31.6	38.2	9.2	3.4	4.0	263.0	302.7	2	92
5500	34.9	40.2	12.4	2.8	3.2	215.2	247.7	1	93
6000	36.5	42.0	17.0	2.1	2.5	164.2	189.0	1	93

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: COURTESY SEA PRO BOATS

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T TESTS

#3436

PHOTO: COURTESY BLUEWATER SPORTFISHING BOATS

BLUEWATER
25T

Bluewater Sportfishing Boats' newest, the 25T, proves itself a purpose-built fishing boat ready to tackle offshore conditions like few boats its size.

An Armstrong engine bracket holds the twin Yamaha F200s and adds 3 feet of length to its 25-foot hull. It has a wave-slashing 24 degrees of deep-V goodness at the transom and an even-sharper 44 degrees at the entry. Yet, because deep deadrise can make a boat tender, all Bluewaters now come standard with Seakeeper's Ride system. This replaces standard trim tabs with what's called a Vessel Attitude Control System. While underway, this makes 1,000 observations and 100 corrections per second using unique cupped blades that travel only a fraction of an inch when at planing speeds. The system reduces pitch and roll by up to 70 percent while the boat's at speed.

Hardcore anglers will love the absence of fixed bowrider seats and a molded-in stern bench, which can rob a boat of angling space. The fishing cockpit is roomy. I taped 47 inches of deck aft of the leaning post. You can add family-friendly seat options, but they are easily removable for fishing. Other features that let you know the 25T is a real-deal fishing boat include the twin 24-gallon transom livewells, twin in-floor 20-gallon fish boxes, and a 133-gallon bow fish box/storage locker that can hold tuna up to an estimated 250 pounds. Our test boat sported 21 total rod holders, including 12 set into the gunwales (eight are standard).

The helm features a pair of flush-mounted Garmin 8612xfv multifunction displays and can accommodate up to 16-inchers. Rather unusual was the optional thin windshield, made of the same polycarbonate material as the optional side panels, which, despite being curved, provided a distortion-free view.

The twin Yamaha F200 outboards proved an excellent option. Time to 30 mph was 9.1 seconds, and the best cruise speed was 25.5 mph (3,500 rpm), which yielded an impressive 2.3 mpg. Along with its jumbo 189-gallon fuel tank, it offers it a theoretical range of nearly 400 miles. Bluewater also rigs twin Suzuki and Mercury outboards up to 500 hp, with a single 300 hp option. Choices in power: just another benefit of owning the Bluewater 25T. *—Alan Jones*

To see a photo gallery of the Bluewater 25T, go to boatingmag.com/3436. **MORE ONLINE**

High Points

- Gunwale height starts at 26 inches aft and grows to 31 inches moving forward.
- Equipped with Gemlux friction hinges, hatches remain open until you close them, so there is little fear of smashed toes and fingers.
- Bluewater is a custom family-owned builder, and with its wide range of options, it can design a boat that gives buyers precisely what they want.

Low Points

- Unlike similar boats, there is no tuna door for landing extra-large fish and helping guests board.
- When deployed, the removable stern bench and bowrider have support legs that stand on some hatches, making these lockers inaccessible.

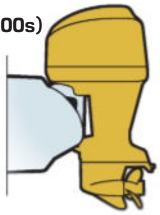
Toughest Competitor

- Parker Boats' 2600 CC ($255,616 MSRP) measures 26-feet-by-9-feet-6-inches—wider than the Bluewater. The T-top, with a powder-coated frame, rocket launcher, lights and more, is standard equipment. The lockable console offers 65 inches of headroom and comes with a portable toilet. Power it with up to twin 250 Yamaha outboards.

· **LOA:** 28'0" (with engine bracket) · **BEAM:** 8'5" · **DRAFT:** 1'8" (motor up) · **DISPLACEMENT:** 5,490 lb. (without engine) · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 24 degrees · **MAX CABIN HEADROOM:** NA · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 7'8" (with hardtop) · **FUEL CAPACITY:** 189 gal. · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 500 · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single or twin Mercury, Suzuki or Yamaha outboards to 500 hp

Price: $213,211
(with Twin Yamaha F200s)

AVAILABLE POWER:
OUTBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

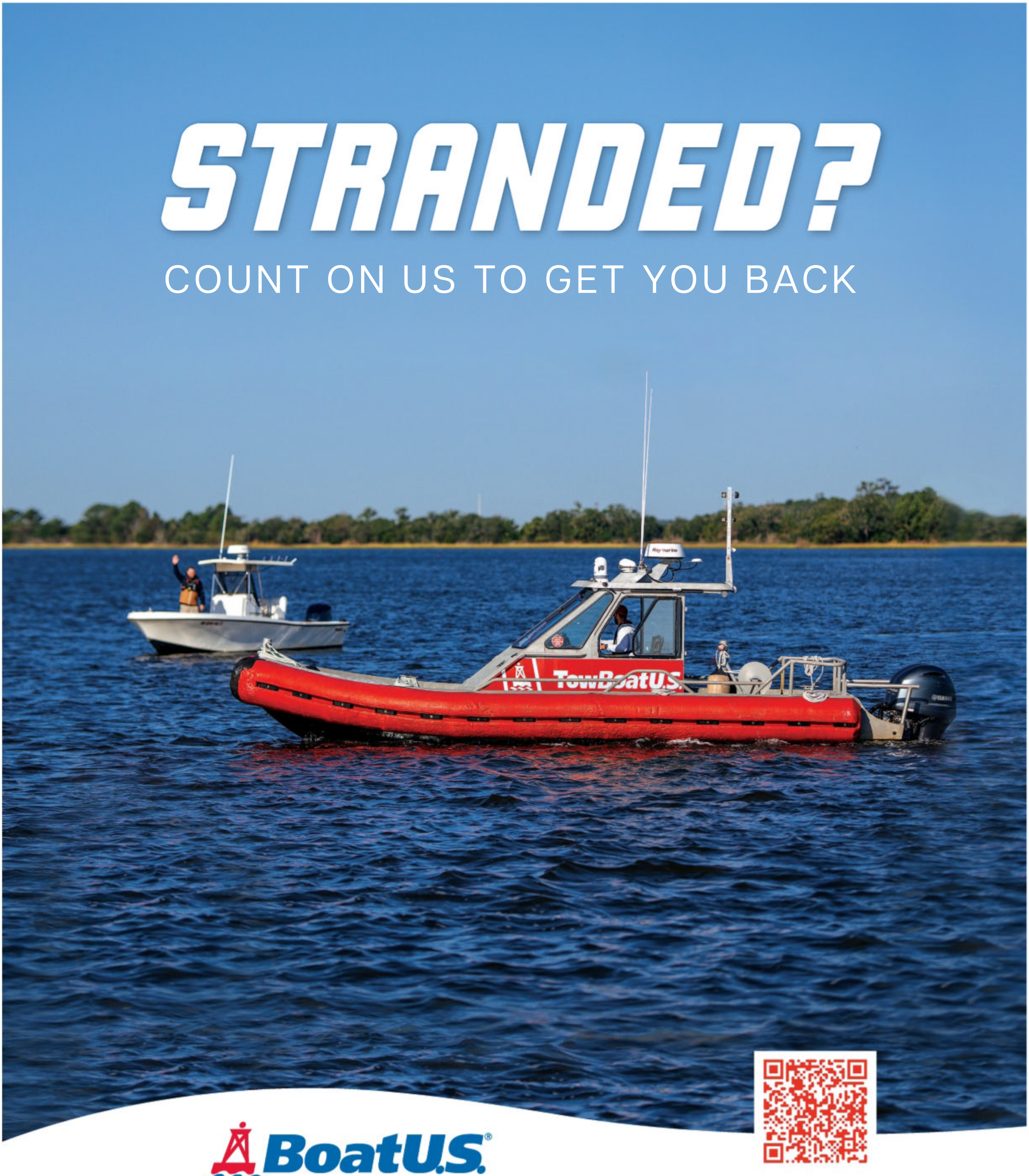
ENGINES: Twin Yamaha F200 outboards **DRIVE/PROP:** Outboard/Yamaha Reliance 14½" x 18" stainless steel **GEAR RATIO:** 1.86:1 **FUEL LOAD:** 80 gal. **WATER ON BOARD:** 0 gal. **CREW WEIGHT:** 400 lb.

BLUEWATER SPORTFISHING BOATS
Fort Pierce, Florida; bluewatersportfishingboats.com

C
BOATING
CERTIFIED TEST RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.6	5.3	1.6	2.9	3.3	485.0	558.1	1	57
1500	6.6	7.6	2.8	2.3	2.7	398.6	458.7	2	63
2000	7.8	9.0	4.6	1.7	1.9	287.6	331.0	4	68
2500	9.7	11.2	7.0	1.4	1.6	235.4	270.9	6	74
3000	14.6	16.9	9.2	1.6	1.8	270.7	311.5	6	80
3500	22.2	25.5	11.0	2.0	2.3	342.7	394.3	5	83
4000	27.0	31.1	13.8	2.0	2.3	333.1	383.3	4	88
4500	32.2	37.1	17.9	1.8	2.1	306.4	352.6	4	90
5000	35.7	41.1	22.7	1.6	1.8	267.3	307.6	2	92
5500	39.4	45.3	31.6	1.2	1.4	211.9	243.8	2	94
6000	44.0	50.6	40.4	1.1	1.3	185.1	213.0	2	95

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED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LANCER CRAFT/ELCO
Electric Legacy

The new Electric Legacy, a collaboration between Lancer Craft and Elco, combines rich mahogany looks with 100 percent fiberglass construction, electric-power performance, and impressive run time and range from solid-state batteries.

Compare the Legacy to Lancer Craft's Elite model, which is built on the same hull and powered by a 365 hp 5.3L Ilmor V-8 gas engine. Estimates put gasoline cruising range at three to four times farther.

To see a photo gallery of the Lancer Craft/Elco Electric Legacy, visit boatingmag.com/3437. MORE ONLINE

We tested the Legacy, the first with Elco's EP-250 electric motor, an hour into its initial sea trial. Our top speed equaled 33.9 mph. (After some tweaks, Elco reports 35.7 mph.) Hole-shot tests made clear the EP-250's quick acceleration. When the brushless, permanent magnet electric motor engages, the boat just goes. Power steering eases the Legacy effortlessly into turns, and the one-piece rimless windscreen leaves vision unobscured. While we never hit choppy water, the boat's sharp entry, 14-degree deadrise, and narrow beam should all conspire to deliver a reasonable ride in chop.

Lancer Craft imprints mahogany grain onto fiberglass to form the boat's outer laminate. Crisp white seams mimic planked decks. Its deep-gloss woodgrain look mirrors the faux transoms now common on sport-fishing yachts—and for the same reason: to replace high-maintenance varnish with wash-and-wax convenience.

The boat's classic lines are equally striking. Along the ample deck edge, glistening stainless-steel highlights the sheerline as it rises from the bow, crests near the helm, and then flows into a graceful S-curve toward the stern. The aft deck slims to meet the tumblehome hullsides and raked transom, where those curves play in light, shadow, and watery reflections of wake and sky. Polished chrome bejewels the deck, and wide mahogany planks appear to flow from the deck edge to form the cockpit sides and dash, where the steering wheel is the only real, once-living wood aboard. Two rows of bench seats—their soft vinyl textured in diamond-weave stitching and accented with red and blue piping—accommodate six adults in luxury.

With the Electric Legacy, and in collaboration with Elco, Lancer Craft welcomes boat buyers seeking classic runabout style, modern convenience and the latest electric technology. —*Capt. Vincent Daniello*

High Points

- ▶ The Elco EP-250's 1.9-to-1 reduction facilitates a larger prop that aids performance, acceleration and efficiency.
- ▶ Faux wood emulates rich, full-grained mahogany but doesn't add weight, environmental impact or maintenance.
- ▶ Besides woodgrain, Lancer Craft offers boats in a variety of gelcoat colors.

Low Point

- ▶ Electric propulsion is quiet, but our test boat requires some tweaking to mitigate the 103 decibels we recorded in one very narrow rpm range (4,500).

Toughest Competitor

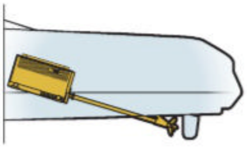
- ▶ The decidedly unclassic XShore 1 is a 21-foot-by-8-foot-6-inch runabout with a 125 kW motor ($168,000 well-equipped). Prefer gas IC power? Lancer Craft's Elite runs $164,749 (base price with a 365 hp Ilmor inboard); shipping ($1,800) and trailer ($7,500) are extra.

· **LOA:** 20'0" · **BEAM:** 6'4" · **DRAFT (MAX):** 1'8" · **DISPLACEMENT (APPROX.):** 2,527 lb. · **TRANSOM DEADRISE:** 14 degrees · **BRIDGE CLEARANCE:** 5'0" · **BATTERY CAPACITY:** 96 kW · **MAX HORSEPOWER:** 365 (gas; Elite model) · **AVAILABLE POWER:** Single Elco EP-250 (186 kW/250 hp) electric inboard; single 365 hp Ilmor gasoline inboard

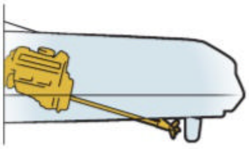
Price: $254,000
(with test power)

AVAILABLE POWER:

ELECTRIC INBOARD



GASOLINE INBOARD



HOW WE TESTED

MOTOR: Elco EP-250 186 kW/250 hp **DRIVE/PROP:** Inboard/14" x 16" 3-blade bronze **GEAR RATIO:** 1.9:1 **BATTERY CAPACITY:** 96 kW **CREW WEIGHT:** 450 lb.

LANCER CRAFT
North Webster, Indiana; lancercraft.com

C
BOATING
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TEST
RESULTS

SPEED			EFFICIENCY				OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	power draw (kW)	time (hours)	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	4.3	5.0	928	93.0	404.8	465.5	1	64
1500	5.8	6.7	4,3	19.8	115.5	132.8	2	74
2000	7.0	8.1	11,0	7.8	55.1	63.4	3	83
2500	8.9	10.2	21,3	4.0	35.9	41.3	6	84
3000	12.7	14.6	33,6	2.5	32.6	37.4	7	84
3500	16.9	19.4	46,3	1.8	31.5	36.2	8	92
4000	20.1	23.2	61,9	1.4	28.1	32.3	7	96
4500	23.3	26.8	77,3	1.1	26.0	29.9	7	103
5000	25.4	29.3	88,6	1.0	24.8	28.5	5	95
5500	27.6	31.8	109,3	0.8	21.8	25.1	5	98
5963	29.4	33.9	127,4	0.7	19.9	22.9	5	94

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

PHOTO: CAPT. VINCENT DANIELLO

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MERCUR
D22
BAYLINER

BAYLINER D22

Bayliner has a long history of building boats aimed at enticing new boaters, and the D22 fits that profile. It's a deck boat, designed to maximize crew space so that you can cruise with the family one day and entertain friends the next, while throwing in the opportunity to go fishing or tubing. Bayliner improves the D22's ride by adding a steeper point of entry and progressive-V. The result is drier, softer handling in rough waters, and smoother turns at speed. In the process, the D22 also gets a sleeker and more athletic appearance while retaining Bayliner's trademark deep and secure feel.

Because Bayliner carried the D22's beam forward into the bow area, there's plenty of seating options in the interior. Forward, a U-shaped lounge wraps the bow cockpit with not only the typical forward-facing seatbacks for those who like to stretch out, but also padded backrests at the forward wall to allow passengers to face aft or watch watersports action in the boat's wakes. Step through the walk-through windshield to find a well-appointed helm and swiveling bucket seat with flip-up bolster. Opposite, the port console adds lockable storage or can be optioned with a portable head. An L-shaped bench measuring 6 feet 8 inches by 5 feet 2 inches runs

PHOTO: TOM KING

LAUNCH PADS

Seven great choices for the first-time boat buyer.

BY THE *BOATING* TECH TEAM

The hardest part of becoming a boater is taking that first step. To be a real boater, you have to actually buy a boat, a prospect that can seem daunting. With so many choices and styles, it's hard to figure out which one is best for you. Plus, so many new boats have six- or even seven-figure price tags, which can make diving into boat ownership akin to buying a luxury estate. Thankfully, there are still builders who are dedicated to producing quality boats at a reasonable price that appeal to the first-time boater. Here are seven great choices to help you get on the water and get going.

the remainder of the portside and across the transom. Behind, a large sun pad faces the swim platform. Pivot the bench backrest forward to fashion a recliner perfect for coving or the sandbar. The adjoining swim platform is covered in comfortable EVA foam, while a locker waits below the port end of the seat for larger items or water toys.

The D22 comes standard with 150 hp Mercury outboard, with a base price of $52,295. Our test model featured the upgrade to a 200 hp Mercury, which increased the price by $6,000. With the 200, we felt that the boat handled really well in the midrange rpm, while providing plenty of oomph to tow skiers and tubers. We climbed onto plane in 4.7 seconds and found the most economical cruising speed to be a brisk 29 mph, where the engine consumed less than 8 gph. Top speed? Just under 45 mph.

PRICE: $58,295 (WITH A MERCURY 200)
LOA: 24'2" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** 2'9"
DISPLACEMENT: 3,994 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 55 gal.

BAYLINER BOATS
Knoxville, Tennessee; bayliner.com

STARCRAFT SV 16 OB

Is it a runabout or a deck boat? At only 16 feet, 10 inches, Starcraft's SV 16 is one of the smallest deck boats on the market but offers big value for the family buyer. Few builders offer fiberglass boats under 20 feet these days, and Starcraft is one of those companies that still builds boats that can be trailered by a typical family vehicle.

While inexpensive, the SV 16 OB never looks cheap. Rather than a simple white base with applied graphics, the hull is available in a choice of bold primary shades, like our test boat's electric blue. That color carries over as an accent onto a generous array of interior upholstery that further belies the boat's price tag. Rounding out the standards are MarineMat, EVA-covered bow and stern platforms, and a Wet Sounds MC5 stereo.

The SV 16 carries its beam well forward in typical Starcraft fashion, which results in a rectangular profile that notably increases interior space. Seating is arrayed into three primary zones. Two lengthwise couches line the bow, inviting a pair of passengers to stretch out and lounge, or multiple family members or friends to sit up and socialize. Aft, a three-passenger bench spans from helm to portside gunwale. When on the hook or at the sandbar, its wrap-over backrests cushion passengers sitting on a third area: the upper deck of the two-tiered EVA-covered swim platform. The latter is a great spot to hang out or gear up for watersports. Stowage awaits below for wet gear such as snorkeling gear or watersports towropes.

Our test boat was equipped with a 70 hp Yamaha outboard, a rig that delivered reliability, fuel efficiency, and enough performance to satisfy the target audience. Slam down the throttle, and the boat reaches a top speed just shy of 31 mph in about 8 seconds flat. Crank the wheel at speed, and the craft nimbly carves a turn, staying hooked up at the stern. Encounter some unwelcome chop on the way back to the dock, and you can hold plane as low as 16 mph. As to that fuel efficiency, we noted a mere 6 gph consumption at that top speed, burning only 2.9 gph at a comfortable cruising speed. The combo makes the SV 16 affordable not only on the showroom floor, but also through years of ownership.

PRICE: $38,228 (WITH YAMAHA 70)

LOA: 16'10" **BEAM:** 7'10" **DRAFT:** NA

DISPLACEMENT: 1,800 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 18 gal.

STARCRAFT MARINE

New Paris, Indiana; starcraftmarine.com

PHOTOS: BILL DOSTER

SUNCHASER LUCERNE 20 LR DH

Perhaps no other boat category has seen more evolution and innovation of late than pontoons. The downside? A lot of pontoons now fall into the luxury-boat category, with six-figure price tags and complicated systems. Thankfully builders such as SunChaser still make affordable pontoons and, in the case of the Lucerne 20 LR DH, ones that still score big on style points.

With its roto-cast corner pieces that match the side paneling, the Lucerne 20 LR DH is an eye-catcher on the water. On pontoons, roto-molded plastic is typically found in seat bases and the occasional helm station, but SunChaser embraces it for a large percentage of both furniture and exterior walls on the Lucerne 20 LR DH. No less than four roto-molded modules are featured in each corner on the top deck. They form not only the Lucerne's four primary seating areas, but also the adjacent exterior walls. Tied together along port and starboard sides with stretches of traditional aluminum fencing and backing panels, the combo strikes a thoroughly modern mix, with the roto-cast's matte gray finish offset by a bright pop of color off the aluminum.

Move to the interior, and those four roto-cast modules reveal a passenger-focused floor plan. Bow lounges feature forward-facing backrests for those who want to stretch out, with wraparound back cushions for when the crew is ready to socialize. The port bench continues down the entire side until it meets the aft gate. Continue that big comfy couch on the starboard side where it backs up to the captain's high-back swiveling helm seat. Overhead, a Bimini top, color-matched to the fence accent hue, offers shade to a large portion of the deck. The sculpted roto-cast helm console features a tilt wheel, gauge array, and Wet Sounds MC5 Bluetooth sound system with four speakers. Swap out the gauges for an optional Hummingbird Helix 5 in-dash GPS.

Belowdecks, the Lucerne rides atop a pair of 23-inch-diameter pontoons. Our test boat's 90 hp Mercury outboard proved a value-minded match to the affordable Lucerne. Handling was precise for an entry-level model, with pontoons hooking up to deliver exceptional cornering with just a hint of outside lean. Paired with a 90-horse Mercury outboard, our test boat peaked just short of 27 mph. At a leisurely 13.5 mph cruising speed, its most economical, that consumption dropped as low as 2.9 gph.

PRICE: $37,965 (WITH MERCURY 90)
LOA: 20'10" **BEAM:** 8'0" **DRAFT:** NA
DISPLACEMENT: 1,875 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 20 gal.

SUNCHASER BOATS
New Paris, Indiana; sunchaserboats.com

STARCRAFT
70
YAMAHA

TAHOE 1950

Tahoe is another builder that's dead-set on providing new-boat opportunities for first-time buyers, and you can find these boats all over the country, typically on display at your local Bass Pro Shop. The 1950 is a smooth family runabout that provides a stable entertainment platform while not breaking the bank. In today's world, a family boat that sells for just $44,000, complete with trailer, is a thrifty winner. With that, Tahoe punches above its fighting weight.

Rigged with a Mercury 150 FourStroke outboard, the 1950 proved to us that it's ready for towed watersports and family cruising to the sandbar or raft-up cove. Hitting 30 mph from an in-gear idle in just 6.5 seconds, we topped out at just under 49 mph with a 17-pitch Mercury Enertia propeller. At a best cruise of 28 mph (3,500 rpm), the Mercury was sipping fuel at just 4.9 gph—that's nearly 6 miles per gallon. With a 40-gallon tank, that's a 209-mile range, leaving 10 percent reserve in the tank. Translated, that's a weekend of fun for maybe $150 in gas.

Tahoe calls its hull design "Powerglide," with a reverse chine and HydroStep lifting strakes for increased overall performance. It works—the hull is nimble, carving turns and slicing through wind chop and boat wakes with the sure-footedness of a larger hull.

You might think that as a high-volume builder, Tahoe might skimp on quality. You'd be wrong: The 1950 is 100 percent hand-laid, no wood involved, with a full-length foam-filled stringer grid. Visually, it's clean and crisp—the full-hull and deck gelcoat colors (white, black, blue, red and gray are available) are well-complemented by the vinyl interior.

Ten can ride; there's wraparound bow seating with storage underneath, an aft L-lounger, and a standard Bimini top. Folding stainless-steel ladders fore and aft make boarding easier. The captain sits on a plush swiveling/sliding bolstered bucket seat behind a fully digital dash with toggle switches to control all boat functions. An in-floor ski locker and removable aluminum watersports tow are standard, as are a digital depth gauge and four-speaker Bluetooth sound system. If you'd rather fish, an aerated 11.5-gallon livewell in the bow, coupled with optional fishing packages (including trolling motor, graphs, livewell, added batteries and chargers), can add even more versatility.

PRICE: $43,995 (AS TESTED)
LOA: 19'5" **BEAM:** 8'6" **DRAFT:** 1'5"
DISPLACEMENT: $2,500 lb. (without engine)
FUEL CAPACITY: 40 gal.

TAHOE BOATS
Springfield, Missouri; tahoeboats.com

MERCURY
TOURNAMENT EDITION
PRO TEAM 175
TRACKER

1950
TAHOE
1950
MERCURY

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY TAHOE BOATS, COURTESY TRACKER BOATS

TRACKER PRO TEAM 175 TOURNAMENT EDITION

Not everybody who wants to go bass fishing needs a rocket ship that can blast out of the hole and soar to 90 mph. Sometimes 40 mph is all you need to enjoy a full day of looking for lunkers. Enter the Tracker Pro Team 175 Tournament Edition.

This well-equipped fishing platform brings style, fishability, and performance together at a real value. Rigged with a thrifty Mercury 75 hp outboard, its no-haggle price is just $24,715 (plus freight and tax), and it scoots to 41 mph. It's a strong-running and well-equipped fishing package.

Mercury's 75 hp FourStroke, fitted with a 17-pitch standard aluminum propeller, zings this 17-footer to 30 mph in just 7.6 seconds. Fuel costs won't break the bank: At its best cruise speed of 25 mph at 3,500 rpm, it burns just 3 gph to deliver over 8 mpg. With a 21.5-gallon tank, that calculates to a 160-mile range, leaving 10 percent in reserve. A whole weekend of fishing for less than a hundred-dollar bill is truly economical.

For its low price tag, the Pro Team 175's offerings are top-shelf in construction and accessories. The hull is all-welded 0.100-gauge aluminum and carries a limited lifetime warranty. It's finished in Diamond Coat powder-coat, available only on Tracker hulls. Lifting strakes and chines are pressed in—not riveted on—for a cleaner look, less drag on the water, and more durability. It's a quiet ride, which comes from better hull stiffening and added foam (10 percent more than required by USCG standards) for sound deadening.

A Minn Kota Edge 12-volt trolling motor is standard, mounted on the bow, with a recessed tray for the control pedal. Upgrading to 24-volt is an option. An elevated bow deck houses a center tackle-storage locker flanked by port and starboard rod lockers that accommodate up to 16 8-foot rods. A 30-quart insulated cooler is standard.

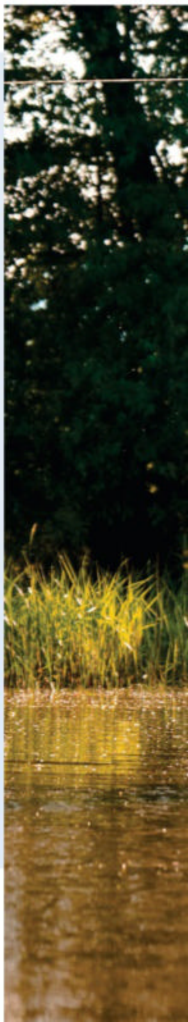
The driver's console features a new roto-molded design, and is fitted with a Tracker touchscreen digital gauge display and standard Lowrance Hook graph. Single-cable no-feedback steering is standard and was smooth in our tests. New, more-comfortable pilot and navigator seats make long rides easier and less tiring. An elevated aft casting deck features molded dual storage boxes, each capable of housing three Plano 3700 tackle boxes. A 21-gallon aerated livewell with divider, timer and pump-out system is standard.

All that—plus a custom trailer—makes this the MVP in out-the-door, fishing-ready family fun.

PRICE: $24,715 (AS TESTED)
LOA: 17'7" **BEAM:** 7'5" **DRAFT:** 1'0"
DRY WEIGHT: 1,050 lb. (without engine)
FUEL CAPACITY: 21.5 gal.

TRACKER BOATS
Springfield, Missouri; trackerboats.com

HIGHFIELD
Velox
O'BRIEN



ALUMACRAFT TROPHY 185X SPORT

Multispecies fishing boats have been a staple of lakes, rivers, and inland waterways forever because of their utility and versatility. They offer a way to get fishing without paying more than you did for your house. The Alumacraft Trophy 185X Sport does all that with an added twist—no outboard motor hanging off the transom.

That's because the Trophy 185X Sport features a Rotax 150S motor that resides below the Max Deck, its horizontal powerhead sealed in a watertight case. Moving the engine inboard means extra deck space for you and your crew, and also not having to worry about a prop in the water in skinny situations or while taking a dip at anchor.

The extra space is amplified when you consider one of Alumacraft's key upgrades. Our test boat came with the new Max Deck option that features 25 square feet of elevated casting deck. The Max Deck surface is covered with soft MarineMat and has LinQ integrated attachment points to secure an accessory cooler or cargo box. The deck also has a pair of fishing seat bases, hatches covering a pair of small storage compartments, and a sturdy grab handle for the retractable boarding ladder.

The Max Deck is great for angling, but it also provides extra space for family boating—room to lounge, a built-in diving platform or a spot to secure a tube. Alumacraft Trophy models feature a deluxe interior, padded backrests on the front of the consoles, a full-height windshield, and a four-speaker audio system.

New for 2025 is a redesigned, injection-molded helm with a standard 7-inch Garmin EchoMap multifunction display for instrumentation, a switch panel to the lower right, and room on top of the dash for two 12-inch displays. A new bow control center provides a recessed position for a 12-inch graph, plus a well for storing a trolling-motor pedal, a tool holder, and cellphone holder with a USB port. A new Flex Module system offers the choice of three configurations at the aft end of the cockpit: Flex 29 with a carpeted bench/step and a 29-gallon livewell, Flex FSX with a pair of jump seats flanking a 30-gallon livewell, or Flex 50 with a 50-gallon livewell.

The Trophy rides the Alumacraft 2XB double-plated aluminum hull with a seamless one-piece bottom designed to be durable and feel solid on the water. The running surface is slightly concave from keel to chine to help the boat carve smartly through turns. A pair of 16-inch X-Pod extensions flanking the drive are designed to improve planing performance and stability at rest.

PRICE: $56,760 (BASE)

LOA: 20'2" **BEAM:** 8'2" **DRAFT (MAX):** NA

DISPLACEMENT: 1,929 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 36 gal.

ALUMACRAFT BOATS

St. Peter, Minnesota; alumacraft.com

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY HIGHFIELD BOATS, COURTESY ALUMACRAFT BOATS

HIGHFIELD VELOX 420

The new Highfield Velox 420 is a welcome addition to the entry-level-boat segment. Priced at $36,000, this jet-powered RIB is intended to fill the compact runabout niche somewhat abandoned by other popular boat brands. Highfield is pitching the Velox not only as a tender, but also as a family boat ideal for younger captains.

The 14-foot-7-inch Velox 420 features a powder-coated aluminum hull surrounded by Orca Hypalon tubes. The hull incorporates the boat deck, integrated 14.5-gallon fuel tank, and swim platform. The helm console and bow boarding step are molded fiberglass. The boat is powered by a 90 hp Rotax 900 ACE jet drive, the same reliable three-cylinder 899cc powertrain in the Sea-Doo Spark watercraft. A fiberglass insert forms the jet-pump intake and the aft center of the running surface to provide efficient intake flow in a shape that would be challenging to form in aluminum.

The aluminum hatch over the engine bay is also the base for the main seat—wide enough for two or a tight-fit three people. The pivoting backrest enables facing forward or aft. The deep boarding platform is covered with the same MarineMat material that covers the deck. There's also a small seat on the forward helm console and a seat pad in the boarding step. Stowage space is limited to some room within the console, accessed by raising the forward seat.

The helm console holds a Medallion touchscreen display that can be used to select Rotax performance modes (Eco, Docking and Ski). Switches for lighting and the head for the optional audio system ($920) are to the left of the wheel. There is a wireless-device charger next to the display screen. The console is topped with a small windscreen and a robust grab handle.

The jet pushed this 1,060-pound vessel to a top speed of 38 mph with a light load. Performance is typical jet: Strong acceleration starts at about 5,500 rpm, and at speed in a hard turn, the radius tightens until the boat starts to slide a bit, but this is easy to control. Fuel economy is outstanding at better than 6 mpg at cruising speeds, for a range of about 100 miles. That's a lot of fun per gallon.

PRICE: $36,000

LOA: 14'7" **BEAM:** 6'9" **DRAFT:** NA

DISPLACEMENT: 1,060 lb. **FUEL CAPACITY:** 14.5 gal.

HIGHFIELD BOATS

Cadillac, Michigan; highfieldboats.com

TROPHY 185X
ALUMACraft

BATTLE OF SUZUKI V-6

SUZUKI
FOUR STROKE
200

THE 200s:

VS. INLINE-4

We put two versions of Suzuki's 200 hp outboards to the test to see if one reigns supreme.

BY ALAN JONES

PHOTOS: COURTESY SUZUKI

PHOTOS: COURTESY SUZUKI

In 2016, Suzuki unveiled its new 2.9L inline four-cylinder DF200A outboard, which was lighter and more fuel efficient than its V-6 model that had been on the market since 2004. Confident that its engineers had invented a better mousetrap, Suzuki discontinued selling the 3.6L V-6 DF 200 in the US when the I-4 was introduced, but the V-6 was still offered in select overseas markets.

Feedback from boaters and dealers, however, indicated that there was still demand for a 200 hp V-6 in North America by those who could benefit from the increased low-end torque and snappier throttle response that the 3.6L block produces. Suzuki's competitors—Mercury, Yamaha and Honda—still offer V-6 200 models, and Mercury even offers a V-8 200 in its ProXS line that also includes a 300 hp version, using the same 4.2L powerhead. So, for 2025, Suzuki went back to the future and reintroduced updated versions of its 200, 225 and 250 hp motors.

Although most outboard engines don't share a platform with cars, the automotive industry has gradually shifted its internal-combustion motors to more-fuel-efficient smaller displacement engines. As a result, the once-ubiquitous V-8s were usurped by V-6 engines, and then largely replaced by inline-4-cylinder engines. But the missions for boats and cars are not the same. Although car engines need blasts of power to merge onto highways and to pass, many engines use turbocharging for an extra kick. Also, wheeled vehicles don't have as much drag and usually stay within the lower range of rpm due to having a multispeed transmission.

Due to the drag of water, boats demand more from their engines, and their load is like that of a car constantly going up a steep hill. Unlike automobile powerplants, boat engines never coast. In rough seas, snappy acceleration and excellent torque are needed to stay on plane at lower speeds for safety. As the old saw goes, there's no replacement for displacement. So, the "new" V-6 makes sense for certain applications. But inquiring minds wanted to see how each iteration of the Suzuki 200 performed with different loads. So we put both versions to the test on the transom of a Carolina Skiff 21 Ultra Elite. Here's what we found.

HEAD-TO-HEAD

For the test, *Boating* Editor-in-Chief Kevin Falvey, photographer/videographer Michelle Gaylord and I converged on the Suzuki Marine Technical Center USA in Panama City, Florida, in December. Winter weather in the Panhandle can be a crapshoot, and we lucked out with bluebird skies, gentle winds, and temperatures in the low 70s. (A month later, Panama City was covered in 5 inches of snow, beating the record of 3 inches set in 1895.)

To reduce variables, we tested both engines on the same Carolina Skiff 21 Ultra Elite with identical payloads, which included topping off the 52-gallon fuel tank before each test. First, we ran a standard *Boating* Certified Test on both engines with two people aboard, totaling 434 pounds of buffet-loving human ballast. Gas weighs 6.1 pounds per gallon, which adds another 317 pounds. This Carolina Skiff model requires a 25-inch motor, so the first test was with Suzuki DF200A, an inline-4 cylinder outboard weighing 529 pounds.

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE DF200T?

The most significant update for the DF200T is the addition of an updated CANBus system, which allows the engine to communicate with other devices without the need for a central computer, allowing vital engine information to be displayed on an MFD. In addition, the new version includes keyless start, an optional easy-start system, as well as auto trim and troll control.

The boat is 20 feet, 9 inches long with an 8-foot beam, and has a dry weight of 2,636 pounds and a passenger capacity of 14 people (you can play musical chairs to determine who gets a seat). Our 200 hp test engines were at the top of the boat's allowable limit.

For the second round of testing, we added 400 pounds of lead-filled bags strategically placed throughout the boat where people would usually be sitting. We also welcomed aboard the test center's engine guru, general manager David Greenwood, who has been with Suzuki for nearly four decades, weighs 165 pounds, and is evidently a salad lover who believes in working out. We focused on cruising speeds, top end, and acceleration for these runs to see how the numbers would change under heavier load.

SUZUKI 2.9L INLINE-4 DF200A

· **NUMBER OF CYLINDERS:** Inline-4 · **WEIGHT, MECHANICAL SHIFT:** L 518 (20" shaft), X 529 (25" shaft), digital shift, add 2 lb. · **DISPLACEMENT:** 175.9 cu. in., 2,867cc **BORE AND STROKE:** 97 mm x 97 mm · **GEAR RATIO:** 2.5:1 · **ALTERNATOR OUTPUT:** 44 amps · **OPERATING RANGE:** 5,500-6,100 rpm · **KEY FEATURES:** Suzuki's DF200A Lean Burn system uses sensors and its onboard computer to adjust the air/fuel mixture to the optimal level based on real-time information regarding need. The I-4 AP model also features Selective Rotation, which can change the prop's primary direction of rotation.

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	3.35	3.85	0.60	5.58	6.42	261	300	1	60
1500	4.65	5.35	1.10	4.23	4.86	198	228	2	64
2000	5.60	6.45	1.60	3.50	4.03	164	189	4	69
2500	6.60	7.60	2.70	2.45	2.81	114	132	5	74
3000	7.91	9.10	3.90	2.03	2.33	95	109	3	77
3500	16.21	18.65	5.00	3.24	3.73	152	175	2	81
4000	22.12	25.45	6.10	3.63	4.17	170	195	2	82
4,000	20.5	23.60	6.68	3.10	3.50	152	174	2	82
4500	26.94	31.00	7.80	3.45	3.97	162	186	2	83
4,500	25.5	29.30	8.20	3.10	3.60	153	177	2	83
5000	30.76	35.40	9.40	3.27	3.77	153	176	2	84
5500	34.63	39.85	12.40	2.79	3.21	131	150	1	86
6000	38.32	44.10	17.10	2.24	2.58	105	121	1	89
6,000	35.53	41.80	17.92	2.00	2.33	100	115	1	89
6150	39.89	45.90	18.70	2.13	2.45	100	115	2	90

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

WITH THREE PEOPLE ON BOARD, FULL FUEL AND A 900-POUND BALLAST

0 TO 30 MPH: 13.0 SEC.; 25 TO 40 MPH: 10.6 SEC.

WHEN LOADED, THE I-4 GOT 0.67 MPG LESS AT 4,000 RPM

> ONE ASPECT OF THIS MOTOR THAT SEPARATES IT FROM ALL OTHER 200 HP MOTORS ON THE MARKET IS ITS ULTRA-LOW 2.5-TO-1 GEAR RATIO, WHICH ALLOWS IT TO SWING LARGER-DIAMETER PROPS, AND SO MOVE MORE WATER.

SUZUKI
200
FOURSTROKE

PHOTO: MICHELLE GAYLORD

TALE OF THE TAPE

In this corner, the younger 2.9L inline 4-cylinder DF200A comes in shaft lengths of 20 inches and 25 inches, weighing 518 pounds and 529 pounds, respectively, for the mechanical shift models. The digital shift option adds 2 pounds to each. The 200 hp I-4 is the most powerful engine in the 2.9L platform family that also includes 150 and 175 hp versions. The peak output of its alternator reaches 44 amps.

One aspect of this motor that separates it from all other 200 hp motors on the market is its ultra-low 2.5-to-1 gear ratio, which allows it to swing larger-diameter props, and so move more water. All other 200 outboards on the market have higher gear ratios that range from 1.85-to-1 (Mercury FourStroke 200 V-6) to 2.0-to-1 (Honda V-6 BF200). For our test, the inline-4 DF200A used a 15-by-21-inch three-blade stainless-steel Suzuki Watergrip prop, which is about the average diameter of a large pizza.

In the other corner is the updated version of the 200 hp V-6 engine, now called the DF200T. It comes in three different shaft lengths; the 20-inch model is popular for use on bass boats and weighs 582 pounds, and the 25-inch version, which we used for this test, weighs 606 pounds. The V-6 200 is the only Suzuki 200 offered in a 30-inch version, which weighs 626 pounds and is targeted for larger offshore boats. The DF200T is the least powerful in the 3.6L platform, which also features a 225 and 250 hp model. It features a 54-amp alternator, which is 10 more amps than the inline-4.

The DF200T has the second-lowest gear ratio in the industry for 200 hp outboards, with a 2.29-to-1 ratio. For our test, this motor swung a 15¼-by-19-inch three-blade stainless-steel Watergrip prop.

EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE

By pressing the Easy Start button, the DF200A fired right up and settled into a 600 rpm smoke-free idle, registering a near-silent 56 decibels. Despite having only four cylinders, its vibration was nil, in contrast to the old two-stroke days when

a start-up was announced with a cloud of smoke and an idling engine that shook like someone in the first stages of hypothermia. The first test we performed was to measure its acceleration. Then, starting at 1,000 rpm, we bumped up the throttle in 500 rpm increments while measuring speed, fuel burn, sound levels, and the angle at which the boat was running. We performed two runs in opposite directions to account for wind and current, then averaged the results. The only problem we encountered was that the boat would start porpoising at higher speeds, which was corrected using a little downforce deflection from the Lenco trim tabs.

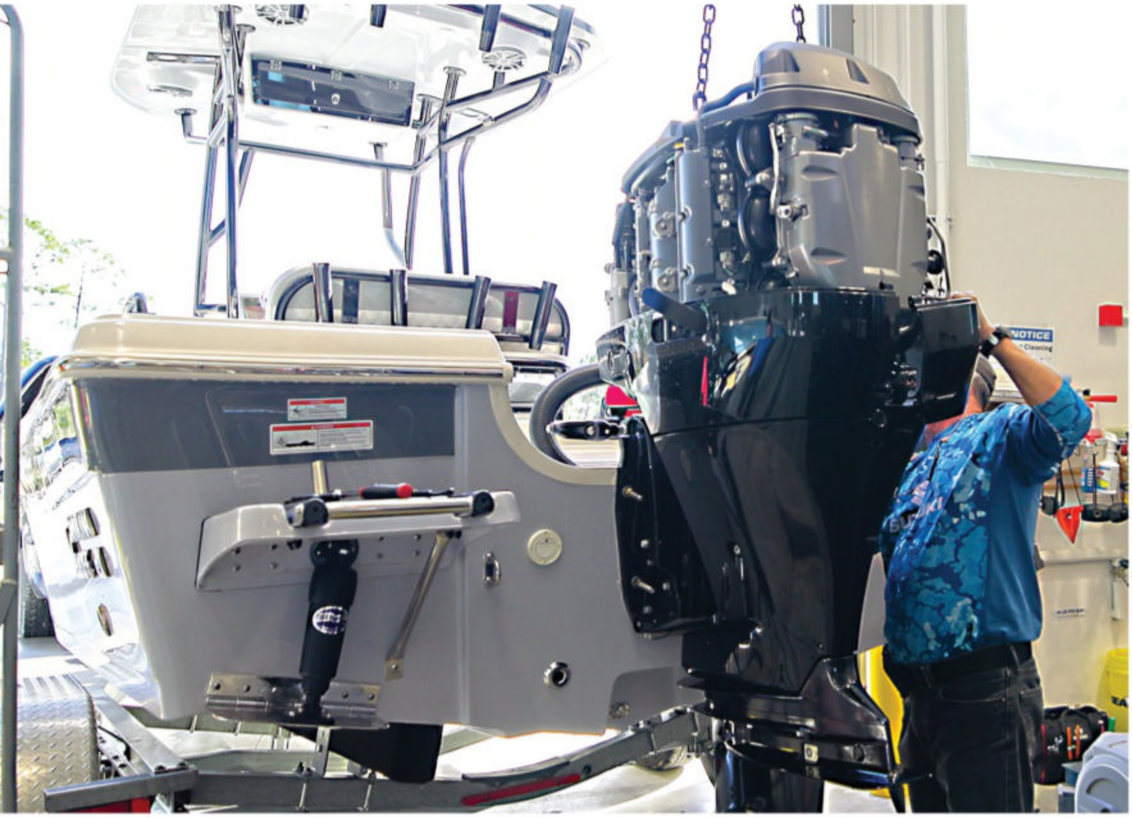
Acceleration was smooth and linear, and the 21 Ultra Elite accelerated to 30 mph in a respectable 10.1 seconds. We also tested midrange acceleration from 25 to 40 mph, which took 9.7 seconds. The DF200A's fuel economy was impressive, and at a slow-troll speed of 1,000 rpm, it sipped only 0.6 gallons an hour, which means it could theoretically putter along at 3.9 mph for nearly 87 hours on a full 52-gallon fuel load. Its best fuel economy was at 4,000 rpm, which pushed the Carolina Skiff to 25.5 mph. At this speed, it achieved an impressive 4.17 mpg, translating to a range of 195 miles. At 4,500 rpm, it reached 31 mph and came within a Visine squirt of fuel away from hitting 4 mpg (3.97). Trimming out the engine until just before the Watergrip propeller lost its grip saw a peak rpm of 6,150, which was 50 rpm over its published max rpm range. In other words, we ran it like we stole it. At its top speed of 45.9 mph, the Suzuki 200A burned only 18.7 gph, yielding 2.45 mpg.

SWAPPING OUT MOTORS

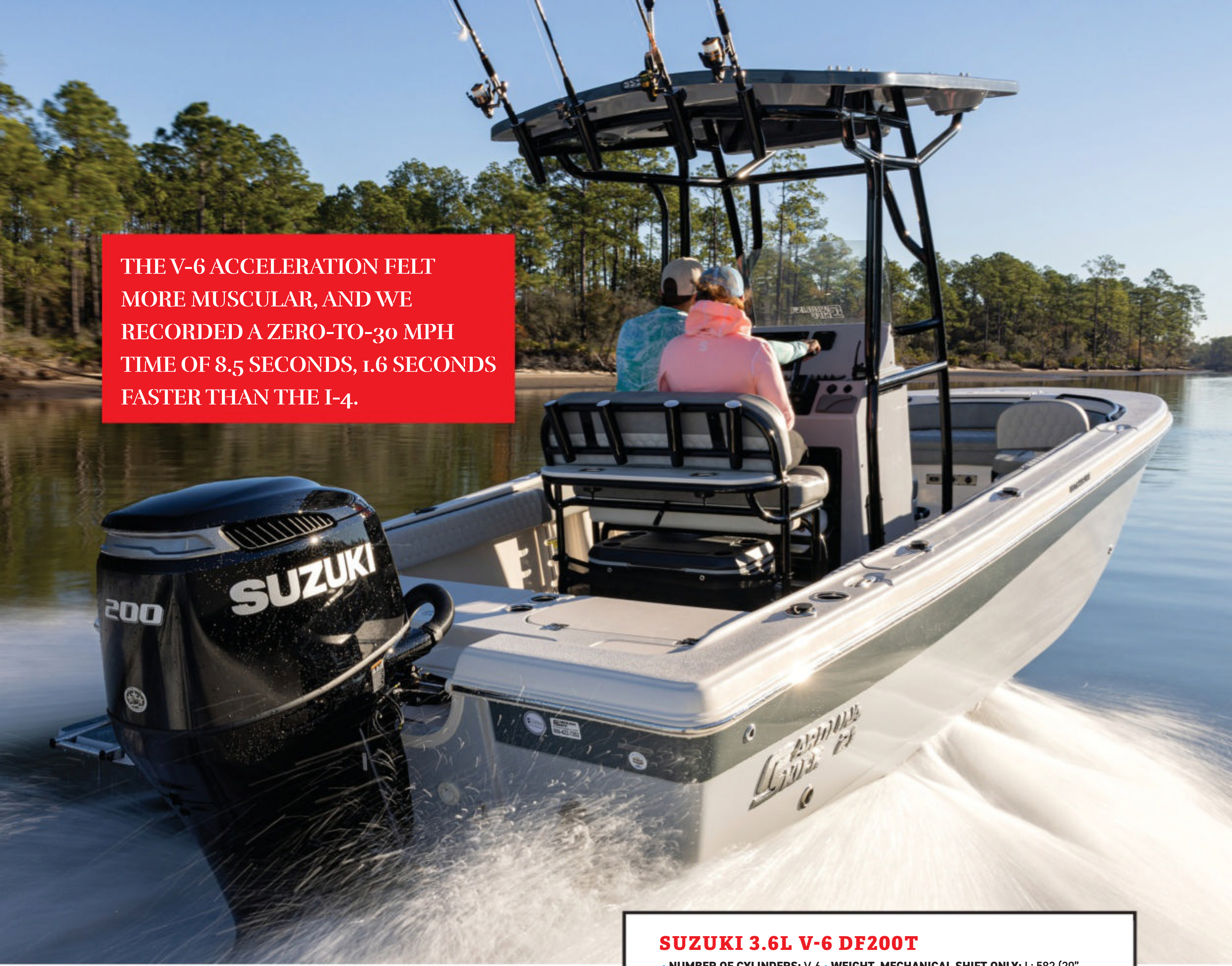
After we tested the inline-4 DF200A, the Suzuki tech team—doing its best imitation of a NASCAR pit crew—switched the Carolina Skiff's engine to the V-6 DF200T. First, they tilted the engine vertically, disconnected its battery cables, unplugged the main harness from the motor to the helm, and disconnected the fuel line and the sub-electrical lead. Suzuki engineers made the process easy by providing lifting hooks on the motor, so the crew used them to support the engine's weight with a forklift and chain, then unbolted the motor from the boat and placed it on a stand. Installing the motor was the reverse of the removal procedure. The elapsed time was about 45 minutes.

BIG DISPLACEMENT ENERGY

Like the inline-4 model, the V-6 200 fired up quickly after a push of the keyless-start button, which wasn't available in its earlier iteration, as was the easy-start feature. The bigger block was two decibels louder at idle—58 dB(A)—but that level was barely audible. The V-6 acceleration felt more muscular, and we recorded a zero-to-30 mph time of 8.5 seconds, 1.6 seconds faster than the I-4. The midrange acceleration test saw a time from 25 mph to 40 mph of 7.5 seconds, which was 2.2 seconds faster. The faster acceleration times illustrate the advantage of larger displacement. In simple terms, with greater room in the combustion



PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) COURTESY SUZUKI, MICHELLE GAYLORD



THE V-6 ACCELERATION FELT MORE MUSCULAR, AND WE RECORDED A ZERO-TO-30 MPH TIME OF 8.5 SECONDS, 1.6 SECONDS FASTER THAN THE I-4.

chamber, more air and gas can be jammed in before the spark plug ignites it. But there's no such thing as a free lunch in physics because burning more gas for improved acceleration reduces fuel economy, as the numbers revealed.

The best cruising speed for the V-6-powered Carolina Skiff was also at 4,000 rpm, pushing it to 26.5 mph and netting 3.34 mpg, which is 0.83 mpg less than the I-4. This mileage was about 20 percent worse, reducing the boat's range by 39 miles. At wide-open throttle, the V-6 reached 46.6 mph at 6,000 rpm, which was 0.3 mph faster than the I-4, illustrating that 200 hp is 200 hp, no matter the displacement. The fuel burn at WOT was 20.3 gph, translating to 2.3 mpg—not too far off the 2.45 mph that the I-4 achieved.

PHOTO: COURTESY CAROLINA SKIFF

LOAD 'ER UP!

With the 900 pounds of ballast loaded, the tank full, and Falvey, Greenwood and me on board, we headed off into the West Bay section of Robinson Bayou. The measured numbers can be found on the performance charts.

IN CONCLUSION

So, which Suzuki outboard is best? After crunching the numbers, it's a split decision. Get the 2.9L I-4 DF200A if you want the best fuel economy available and have a boat that performs better with a lighter outboard. The 3.6L V-6 DF200T is ideal for those who have heavier boats or carry more payload and want better acceleration and throttle response.

SUZUKI 3.6L V-6 DF200T

· **NUMBER OF CYLINDERS:** V-6 · **WEIGHT, MECHANICAL SHIFT ONLY:** L: 582 (20" shaft), X: 606 (25" shaft), XX: 626 (30" shaft) · **DISPLACEMENT:** 220.5 cu. in., 3,614cc **BORE AND STROKE:** 95 mm x 85 mm · **GEAR RATIO:** 2.29:1 · **ALTERNATOR OUTPUT:** 54 amps · **OPERATING RANGE:** 5,500-6,000 rpm · **KEY FEATURES:** The DF200T, like the I-4 model, has an offset drive shaft that moves the center of gravity farther forward for better balance. This design also enables a two-stage gear reduction to allow its gear ratio to be low to swing larger props. Variable Valve Timing on both models changes the valve timing to provide better low-end torque and top-end performance.

SPEED			EFFICIENCY					OPERATION	
rpm	knots	mph	gph	naut. mpg	stat. mpg	n. mi. range	s. mi. range	angle	sound level
1000	3.95	4.55	0.90	4.39	5.06	206	237	1	60
1500	5.26	6.05	1.60	3.29	3.78	154	177	2	65
2000	6.30	7.25	2.30	2.74	3.15	128	148	3	73
2500	7.21	8.30	3.90	1.85	2.13	87	100	5	75
3000	8.21	9.45	6.00	1.37	1.58	64	74	7	79
3500	17.55	20.20	6.90	2.54	2.93	119	137	7	82
4000	22.64	26.05	7.80	2.90	3.34	136	156	5	83
4,000	22.27	26.20	8.40	2.70	3.12	134	154	5	83
4500	28.02	32.25	10.50	2.67	3.07	125	144	3	85
4,500	26.69	31.40	10.30	2.6	3.05	131	150	3	85
5000	32.33	37.20	12.80	2.53	2.91	118	136	3	88
5500	35.67	41.05	15.80	2.26	2.60	106	122	2	90
5,900	37.40	43.10	20.00	1.90	2.16	92	106	2	90
6000	40.49	46.60	20.30	1.99	2.30	93	107	2	91

MOST ECONOMICAL CRUISING SPEED

WITH THREE PEOPLE ON BOARD, FULL FUEL AND A 900-POUND BALLAST

0 TO 30 MPH: 10.2 SEC.; THE V-6 WAS 2.8 SECONDS FASTER THAN THE I-4. 25 TO 40 MPH: 10.1 SEC.; SURPRISINGLY, THE V-6 WAS ONLY 0.5 SECOND FASTER THAN THE I-4. THE TOP SPEEDS WERE NEARLY THE SAME WITH A LIGHT LOAD. THE LOADED V-6 WAS FASTER.

By Capt. Vincent Daniello

SOLID-STATE BATTERIES

What you need to know about the latest battery tech.

SOLID STATE
MARINE
12 V
210Ah
3025Wh

NEXT-GEN Solid-state batteries from Solid State Marine (above) feature a thin, solid lithium electrolyte coating that saves weight and boosts capacity.

As recently as this past winter, solid-state batteries were touted as future tech poised to move electric propulsion rapidly forward. Jumping ahead a year, Honda announced limited production of these new-generation batteries sometime early in 2025. But, *Boating* had already tested solid-state batteries in the Electric Legacy (see page 72), a classic runabout replica collaboration between Elco and Lancer Craft. So, what did we discover about this technology and how it might benefit you?

WHAT IS A SOLID-STATE BATTERY? In most batteries, be they lead-acid or lithium, liquid electrolyte facilitates energy transfer between cathode, anode, and electrical equipment. Solid-state batteries still employ lithium, but the electrolyte is an ultra-thin solid coating. "The US government has been using solid state for 20 years," says Tom Calef, founder and CEO of Solid State Marine. "The issue has been manufacturing. If that nano-thickness coating isn't the same every time, you'll have one cell that stores 100 watt-hours, and the next has only 10." With those challenges overcome, Calef says his company now offers solid-state marine batteries at competitive prices in voltages and sizes common for marine applications.

WHAT'S BETTER ABOUT SOLID STATE? Solid electrolyte coatings make solid-state batteries about half the weight of today's lithium-iron-phosphate (LiFePO4) batteries for the same stored power. There is a bigger advantage though. "It takes a lot less energy to push through a solid material than it does a liquid," Calef says. That reduced electrical resistance pushes power considerably faster from solid-state batteries into electric motors, while generating less heat in the exchange.

That's a game-changer: It gives electric-boat motors—and other high-draw marine electrical accessories—all the amps they need. This is especially critical when an electric-powered boat is climbing on plane. An analogy might be running your gas-powered boat with undersize lines or clogged fuel filters. Switching to solid-state batteries is like refitting the entire fuel system and tripling the flow. By starting with much lower resistance, solid-state batteries also continue to provide required amps through their entire capacity even as battery voltage drops and resistance climbs, Calef says, increasing usable watt-hours. Another fuel analogy? It's like having a pickup tube 20 percent too short on your fuel tank but then getting a new one that goes all the way to the bottom.

ELECTRIC PROPULSION BENEFITS I assumed that an electric Lancer Craft might barely top 25 mph. Replacing gas-powered bat-

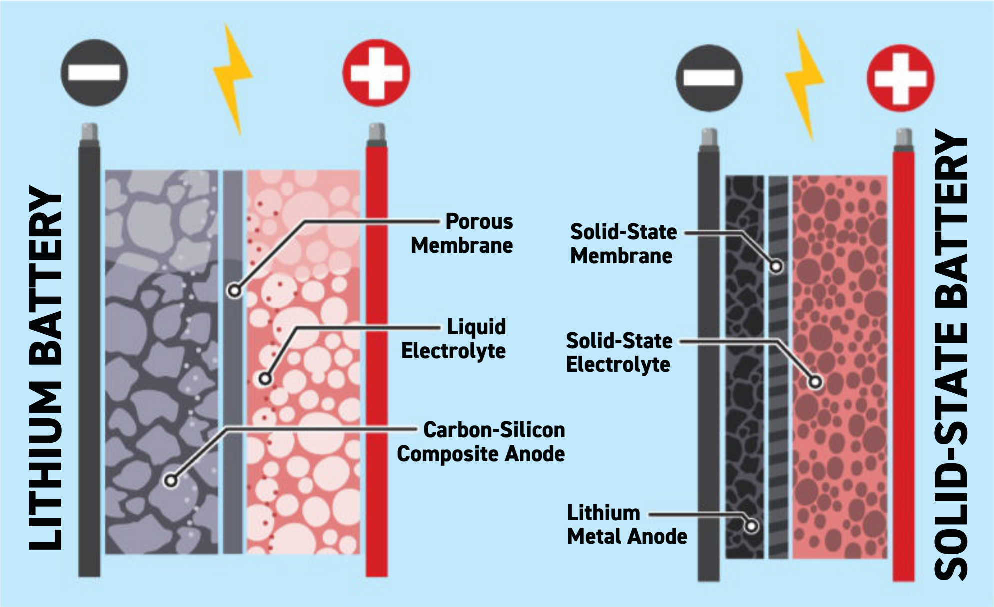


PHOTO: COURTESY SOLID STATE MARINE; ILLUSTRATION: ALLAHFOTO / ADOBE STOCK

PHOTOS: (FROM TOP) CAPT. VINCENT DANIELLO; COURTESY SOLID STATE MARINE

teries with wet lithium batteries adds some 800 pounds to the original designed weight. That's hard for a 20-foot runabout to overcome. Instead, the eight solid-state batteries—at 103 pounds each, plus Elco's 205-pound motor and equipment—weigh 10 percent less than the GM small block, transmission, and full fuel tank. Less weight and more watts result in impressive hole shots and 35 mph top speed, albeit with less range than gas.

SOLID STATE MARINE
48 V
210Ah
SOLID STATE MARINE
10.1KWh

SERVICE LIFE A solid-state battery possesses a similar lifespan to a conventional lithium battery, retaining 95 percent capacity after 1,500 cycles.

SEAKEEPER 2
SOLID STATE
MARINE

GYRO POWER A single solid-state 210-amp-hour 12-volt battery can power a Seakeeper 2 gyrostablizer for a much longer time than three AGM batteries.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER APPLICATIONS? In any application, solid-state batteries roughly double conventional LiFePO4 battery run time for the same weight. Both options—solid-state and LiFePO4—offer bigger gains when consolidating battery banks. In one example aboard a 32-foot SeaVee charter boat, Capt. Tristan Raynes replaced three 12-volt AGM 31 series batteries powering his Seakeeper 2. Just one fully charged 27 series battery from Solid State Marine rated at 210 amp-hours lasts an entire charter; in the past, with the three AGM batteries, he needed to run the SeaVee's twin 300 hp Mercury Verado outboards continuously to power the Seakeeper 2. The boat's aging LiFePO4 trolling-motor batteries were also ripe for upgrade. Raynes' Minn Kota 36-volt trolling motor required three conventional LiFePO4 batteries, which didn't always last all day. Now, just one 31-series solid-state battery increases run time by 20 percent. Today's newest LiFePO4 batteries offer similar consolidation. "I replaced six batteries with just two and took 400 pounds off the boat and added capacity," Raynes says.

LONGEVITY AND CHARGING Calef expects similar lifespans for both solid-state and conventional lithium batteries, retaining 95 percent capacity after 1,500 cycles and 75 percent after 2,500 total cycles. That's a full discharge every day for seven years. Most off-the-shelf lithium-battery AC chargers are compatible with Solid State Marine batteries; Calef mentions NOCO and Victron as examples.

Calef also sees safety gains. Though today's conventional LiFePO4 marine batteries have enjoyed a remarkable safety record to date, it is conceivable that a pierced LiFePO4 battery could ooze electrolyte that could create shorts and overheat the cells, potentially causing a thermal chain reaction. The solid electrolyte in a solid-state battery won't leak, thus preventing a short if pierced. Of course, large power sources are problematic around seawater, and salt water contacting lithium directly in any battery type creates volatile hydrogen gas.

Calef sees boat systems moving steadily toward lithium. "In so many applications, lithium technologies are dramatically better in storing electrical energy than lead," he says. "With solid-state batteries, we're bringing more of the benefit of lithium to the boating market."

By Randy Vance

GARMIN
Back
Nav Info
Home
Mark
Menu
225ft
GLS 10 LIVESCOPE
POWER
NETWORK
STATUS
XDCR

GARMIN has the longest history in live-sonar development and has earned a reputation for prevailing as the top device.

LIVE SONAR IN SALT WATER

Be it Garmin LiveScope, Lowrance Active Target 2 or Humminbird Mega Live 2, live sonar seems to have popped up on bass boats overnight, but saltwater anglers have not adopted it in similar numbers—at least not yet.

Live sonar—perhaps more popularly known as forward-facing sonar, or FFS—shows you what is in the sonar cone in real time, has a near 180-degree coverage, and everything in that arc is instantly painted. Movements of fish are displayed as they occur, much like medical ultrasound imaging.

In shallower water, landscape images offer outstanding situational awareness of all the water in and beyond casting range. Forward-fishing orientation of the transducer is often used in deeper water, and downward-facing sonar is most effective in bottomfishing.

Rich Kale is about as hardcore an angler as can be. Based in Punta Gorda, Florida, he fishes the waters of Charlotte Harbor, Peace River and the Myakka River almost every day. If Kale is spied on the water, anglers get as close to him as they dare. He's an influential angler and is likely responsible for leading many tarpon fishermen away from casting ladyfish and crabs in favor of DOA Bait Busters. He installed Lowrance's Active Target sonar last year and found it so incredibly effective, his salty friends began installing live sonar as well.

Kale counts his tarpon bites and hookups, not his landings. He reports that his bites went up tenfold after he started using Active Target. While the Boca Grande Pass is most famous for its dense tarpon schools and even denser angling fleet, Kale eschews the crowds, using his sonar in the wide-open areas of the harbor and up in the Peace River.

"In open water, I don't cast until I pick them up on sonar," he says. "I can count the number of fish in pods, see which way they are moving and how deep they are. It's easy to put a bait in front of them, and I can see if the fish are interested in it or not. People think it can't work well in salt water due to the water density, but after using it, if somebody told me I couldn't have it anymore, I'd take up bowling."

The density of salt water does reduce the range of FFS by up to 40 percent. Live sonar uses a very high frequency and ping rate to give the instant picture on the screen. The higher the sonar frequency, the more detailed the image, but the saltwater density reduces signal clarity by resisting

HUMMINBIRD
Depth
22.3 ft
Time
3:17 PM
GPS SOG
0.6 mph
XPLORE 12

HUMMINBIRD just introduced Mega Live 2 with the same powerful transducer but enhanced clarity, whether adjusting manually or set to automatic.

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ACTIVETARGET2
LOWRANCE

LIVE SONAR transducers can be mounted on some trolling motors for convenience, but the view is limited to motor directions.

LOWRANCE
120
70
HDS10

high-frequency returns.

That's not a problem in fresh water, and FFS is such an effective tool for bass fishermen that none are competitive without it. It has changed the pace of bass tournament fishing. Anglers don't waste a cast on waters that aren't showing fish on FFS. For nationally televised tournaments, the use of live sonar has taken away much of the visual appeal of fishing. The anglers just stare at their sonar displays until they see a fish. Tournament directors have begun to limit the use of FFS, in part because it's boring to watch.

Another drawback for saltwater anglers is the awkward mounting of the transducer, according to Garmin's David Dunn. LiveScope XR is Garmin's most powerful FFS.

Live sonar has to be mounted on a trolling-motor shaft or a stalk attached to the gunwale, and it is difficult to deploy and retract, especially in rough seas. Garmin doesn't offer mounting stalks and directs its customers to OEM makers—and there are several of them.

"For fresh water, we make our trolling motors capable of having a transducer mounted on the motor shaft, but then the direction of the motor determines what you can see," Dunn says.

Matthew Laster, integrated systems director, fishing systems for Navico and Lowrance, agrees on the convenience factor but has another spin on slow adoption rates. "Freshwater bass anglers are highly publicized and televised. Saltwater fishing doesn't have near as much visibility to spread the word."

Ed Zyack is a Florida charter captain and has been fishing the waters for decades, and doing so as a Humminbird promoter. "Mega Live is a great tool," he says. "I had several charter guys on the west coast [of Florida] using it, and it was so effective that they wouldn't talk about it." It was the antithesis of great sponsorship marketing…until the closely guarded secret got out and spread like wildfire in August.

Hummingbird recently introduced Mega Live 2—an upgraded version with more image clarity in both auto and manual adjustable modes. "It is an enormous improvement in saltwater capability," Zyack says. "You can just turn it on, and it takes very little adjustment to optimize the image."

One thing all our experts agreed on is that saltwater anglers are among the fiercest proponents of angling tradition and are highly suspicious of new techniques. But live sonar is changing their minds.

RAILBLAZA HEXX MOUNT

The Hexx Mount is one of the more convenient devices we've found. Its shaft is anodized aluminum, and mounting hardware is corrosion-proof polymer. The shaft swings to a horizontal position easily and returns to fishing orientation quickly. It dismounts instantly and folds to stow in its supplied carrying case. $210 to $300, depending on shaft length; railblaza.com

SIREN 3 CONNECTED BOAT SYSTEM

Siren Marine's compact new Siren 3 Connected Boat electronic security, monitoring, control, and maintenance system is designed for small to midsize outboard-powered boats, such as bay boats and flats skiffs. The Siren Connected Boat app allows boating anglers to monitor and control onboard systems from anywhere and at any time. Siren 3 supports up to six wireless sensors through SirenWave, a proprietary communication protocol that brings a fast, reliable and secure connection. It also features a new internal-antenna design, which reduces the amount of space needed aboard smaller boats. It can connect to the NMEA 2000 network and the Yamaha CommandLink network for monitoring select Yamaha outboards. Available in spring 2025. Starting at $299; sirenmarine.com —*Jim Hendricks*

PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) COURTESY LOWRANCE (2), COURTESY RAILBLAZA, COURTESY SIREN MARINE

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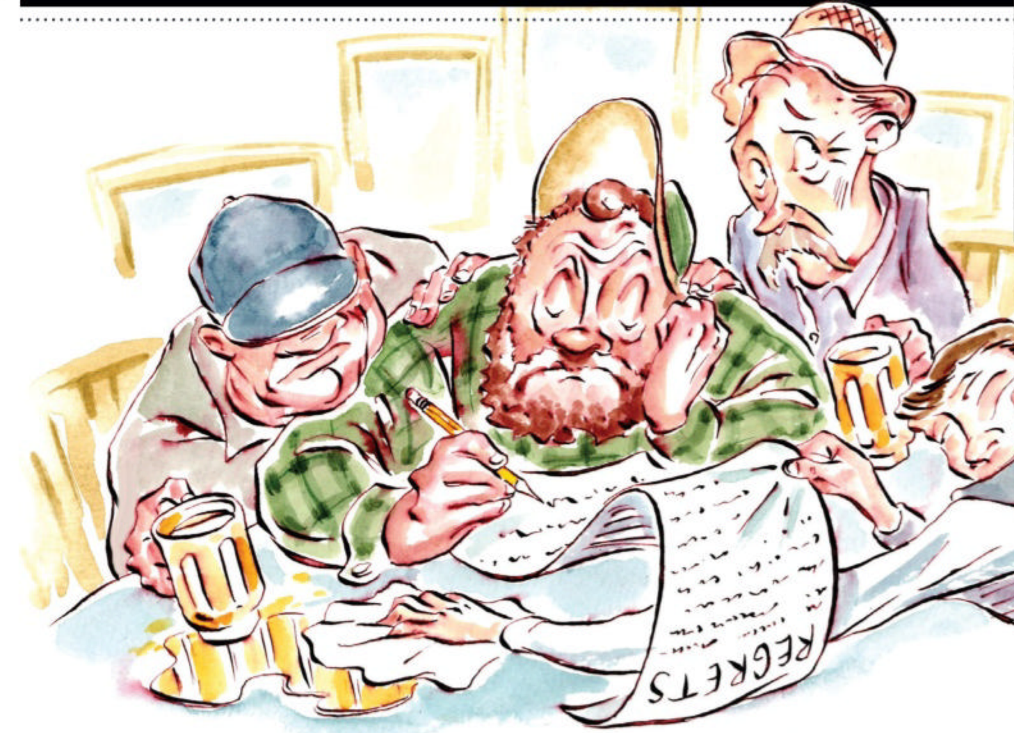
OFF MY DOCK

By Charles Plueddeman



REGRETS? I'VE HAD A FEW

Setting goals for the new boating season.

We are deep into mud season here in the North Woods, that interminable meteorological period that has winter lingering and spring reluctant. My affluent farmer neighbors have escaped to a warm beach, maybe Gulfport or Biloxi, and it's quiet at the Lake View Inn. Perfect time for me to work on my annual list. I hunch over the worn blue Formica bar top and draw two columns on the back of a napkin.

"Working on that list again this year?" Wally asked from behind the bar. "Does it ever help?"

"I like to start with regrets from last season in one column," I replied, "so maybe I won't repeat those mistakes this year."

"Ah, regrets," crooned my good friend Chuck Larson from down the bar. "I've had a few. But then again—"

"So, for example, the weekend of boating I missed out on last year for my niece's wedding. This year, if it's a daughter getting married, I might attend, but I won't go deeper on the family tree," I said.

"And I'm going to skip taking the old Ford to the Iola car show, even if my departed father rolls in his grave. This year I'm all-in on the boat."

Here's the reality of boating at our latitude. The traditional pleasure-boating season starts on Memorial Day weekend and ends on Labor Day. That's 15 weekends for a working person. You can count on at least two of those weekends getting rained out, and a couple more "rained out" because your wife—in my case, the deputy medical examiner—is on call and can't leave the house. Another two will probably be lost to an unavoidable social obligation, a wedding or a graduation or, worst of all, a birthday for a toddler grandchild. Forget about the big holiday weekends, when the launch ramps are mobbed and too many other captains on the lake are deep into a six-pack. If you have a 14-foot vintage runabout like mine, there will be days when it's too windy and rough to launch the boat and have any fun. Next thing you know, the leaves are turning and you've still got a jug full of premix in the shop, and you realize how little your hour meter has turned.

> The traditional pleasure-boating season starts on Memorial Day and ends on Labor Day. That's 15 weekends for a working person.

"It's going to be different this year," I said. "In this column, I'm listing Plans for 2025. I'm going to start by getting the Bearing Buddy kit that I bought last year installed on the trailer, and the vintage spring cleats mounted on the gunwales so we can hang fenders. I've got four weekends devoted to woodboat shows in Wisconsin and Minnesota. And I'm going to propose that we celebrate the grandkid's birthdays on the boat!"

"That last one is brilliant," Chuck said. "Do you think your Evinrude Lark could pull a small tube? It's a vintage boat, so maybe you need to put them in an old tractor tube and pull that around."

"It's still going to rain," Wally said. "And the wind will still blow."

Maybe we'll get a nice drought this year. Regrets? I'm hoping for too few to mention this season.

ILLUSTRATION: TIM BOWER; PHOTO: MABEL PLUEDDEMAN

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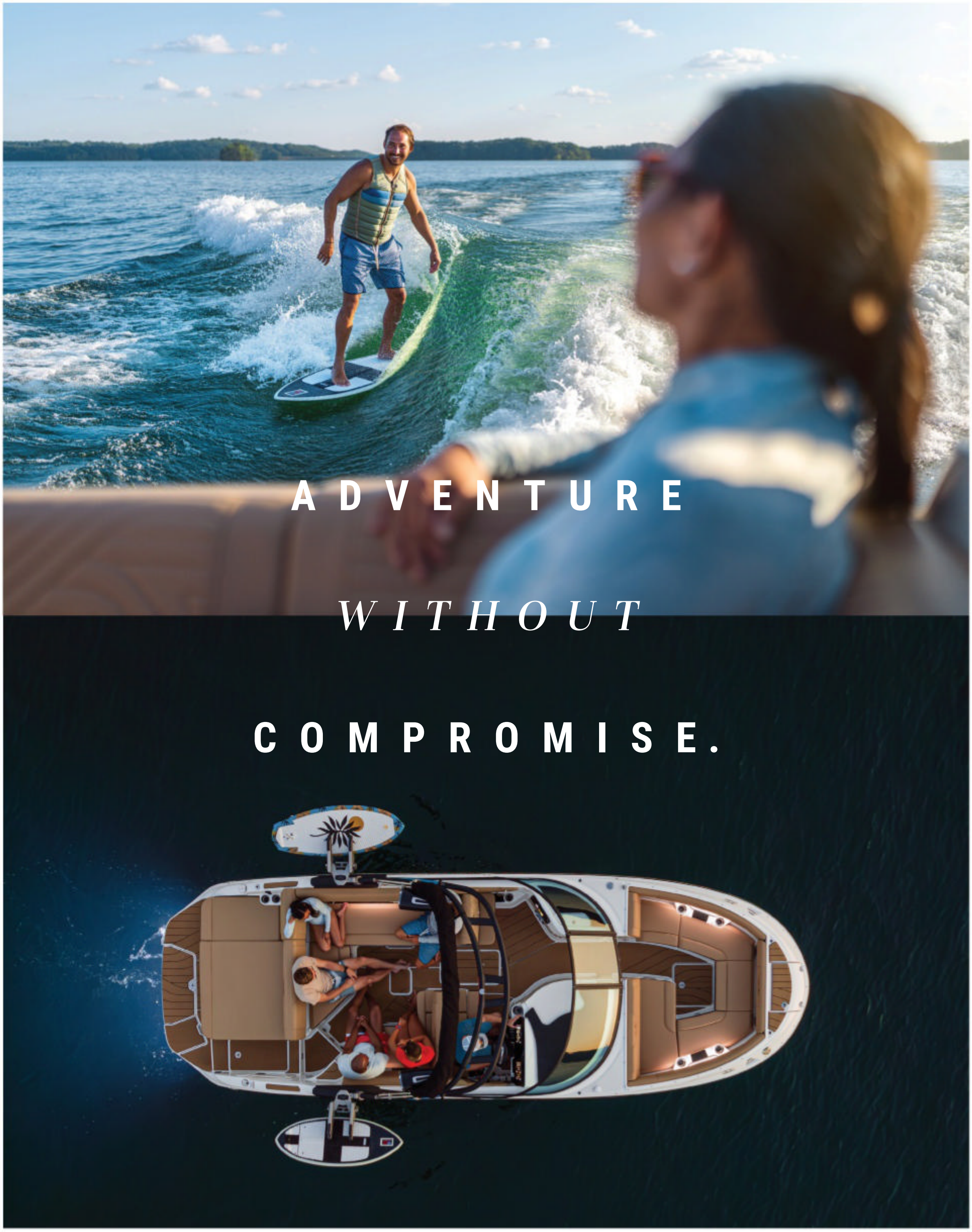

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